Australian Consumers' Association June 1996

CHOICE

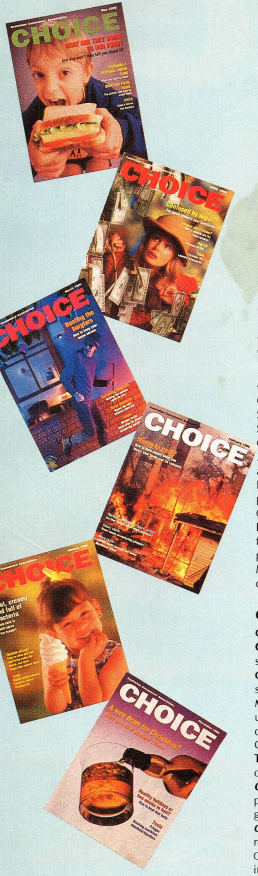
Is beating your lock child's play?

Alarms, locks, immobilisers ... how to keep your car safe

Milk
Choosing the best type for your family

Carpet cleaning
Get those stains out

TESTS:
Car control locks
Internet access providers



About the Consumers' Association

The Australian Consumers' Association is a non-profit, non-party-political organisation established in 1959 to provide consumers with information and advice on goods, services, health and personal finances, and to help maintain and enhance the quality of life for consumers.

We are completely independent. All the products we test are bought randomly in the marketplace. We are not beholden to any commercial, government or union interests, and we don't accept advertising, paid or unpaid. Our income is derived from the sale of CHOICE and our other publications and products.

We test and rate products and services. Our CHOICE ratings are usually based on quality without regard to price, and are derived from lab tests, expert judgments and reader surveys. If a product is high in quality and relatively low in price, we deem it a Best Buy. A rating applies only to the brand and model tested, not to other models sold under the same brand name, unless so noted. We can't conduct special tests or provide information about tested products beyond what appears in CHOICE.

No commercial use policy. Our ratings and reports may not be used in advertising or for any other commercial purpose. The Consumers' Association will take all steps open to it to prevent commercial use of its materials, its name, and the name of CHOICE or our other publications. Please report any apparent violation to the Consumers' Association, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204; fax (02) 558 9341.

We represent and act in consumers' interests. We lobby and campaign on behalf of consumers to promote consumers' rights, to influence government policy, and to ensure consumer issues have a high profile in the public arena.

Membership. Subscribers can become voting members of the Consumers' Association on application. Membership costs $75 per year, which covers your subscription to CHOICE plus a further subscription to our policy magazine, *Consuming Interest*.

About CHOICE

CHOICE is published monthly by the Australian Consumers' Association.

Subscription rates. $48 for one year, $89 for two years; institutions $66 per year.

Subscription problems or changes of address. Write to Subscriptions Department, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, phone (02) 558 8088 or fax (02) 559 3260. Please include your subscriber number (found in the top corner of your CHOICE address label) or have it ready by you when you phone us.

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Other Consumers' Association products

CHOICE Books publishes non-fiction titles on a wide range of consumer-focused topics.

Consumer Bookshelf offers both CHOICE Books and material from other publishers for sale by mail order.

CHOICEFax supplies faxed copies of many CHOICE articles for $6 per article to subscribers, $16 to non-subscribers. Call (02) 558 8088 to order by credit card.

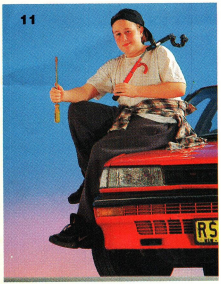
MONEYCHOICE$ gives accurate and independent credit information. It provides up-to-date details about the most competitive home loans, personal loans, overdrafts and credit cards from banking institutions in your area. The information can also be faxed. Call 1902 262 622. (Calls cost $1.50 per minute. Mobile/public phones have higher rates.)

Test Research provides fee-for-service testing of consumer products for other consumer organisations, government and industry. Contact Jeanette Dwyer on (02) 559 9801.

Consuming Interest, our quarterly campaigning magazine, provides straight facts, probing analysis, in-depth reporting, informed opinion and stimulating debates. It also gives updates on the lobbying and campaign projects of the Consumers' Association.

CHOICE Travel. This magazine is produced by the UK Consumers' Association and reprinted by CHOICE four times a year. Its reports are independent in the same style as CHOICE and, while they're written from the perspective of a European base, most of the information in them is just as useful to travelling Australians.

VOLUME 37 JUNE 1996 NUMBER 8



Cover photo: Kent Mears

Coming in the next three issues

Tests: First aid kits, CD-ROM encyclopaedias, camcorders, salad bars, vacuum cleaners, circular saws, garden blower vacs, cots, dairy desserts, solar-powered lawnmower.

Reports: New surgical techniques, how to choose a lawyer, how to add value to your home, toothpaste, health insurance, cold and flu treatments, supermarket prices and which supermarkets you like best, where to invest $10,000 or less, investing in retirement, how to buy a pool, setting up a trust fund, vitamin supplements.

We try to bring you tests and reports in the planned month, but sometimes have to move an article because of problems that occur during testing and research, or for lack of space in a particular issue. We apologise if this causes any inconvenience.

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Australian beef isn't affected, but which British products have been banned, and what can you do if you're travelling in Britain?

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Many can be easily defeated, but which ones will protect your car?

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There are more different kinds than days of the week — this report helps you decide which are best for your family.

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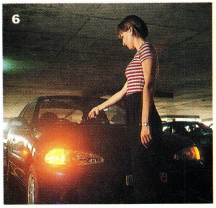
Buying a computer and modem is just the first step on the road to the information superhighway. Our report will help you get connected without blowing your budget.



CHOICE CUTS

Telecommunications

TELEPHONE INFORMATION PACKAGE

DEREGULATION IN TELECOMmunications has given us more choice between phone companies and service providers, but it's also made it more difficult to know what to do if things go wrong.

How do you make the right choice of phone provider? What are your rights? Where can you go for help with disputes?

To celebrate World Consumer Rights Day a consumer information brochure was launched by the two government bodies responsible for protecting consumers when it comes to telecommunications — the Australian Telecommunications Authority (AUSTEL) and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

The brochure — *Are you an informed telephone consumer? Make competition work for you* — covers a number of areas of consumer concern, including resolving complaints, telephone service providers, telephone access, changing your long-distance carrier, telephone cabling and privacy. It also provides a list of contact details for organisations that can help you with information, address your concerns or handle your complaints.

The brochure complements a series of 10 factsheets from AUSTEL which provide more detailed consumer information, and an ACCC booklet called *Hold the phone: Read this before you buy a mobile.*

They are available from AUSTEL at PO Box 7443, St Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004, phone 1800 335 526 or fax (03) 9820 3021.

The factsheets are also available under *Consumer Information* on AUSTEL's World Wide Web Site — http://www.austel.gov.au/

Corrections

CAR INSURANCE

CHOICE, May 1995

On page 9 we said, "Honourable mention to FAI in Victoria for allowing a no-blame waiver even when you can't identify the guilty party." FAI Insurance has now informed us that the information they gave us was incorrect. To get a waiver of your excess when you're not at fault you must be able to identify the guilty party if you're insured with FAI in Victoria.

SECURING YOUR HOME

CHOICE, March 1996

On page 18 we said, "In fact, a security door made to the Australian Standard must have a three-point lock and a minimum of three hinges." We should have said, "Look for a security door that meets the Australian Standard — preferably one that has a three-point lock and a minimum of three hinges."

LAUNDRY DETERGENTS

CHOICE, April 1996

In the table on page 27 we incorrectly showed the cost per wash of **BUSHLAND Liquid** as 38 cents. The correct price per wash (based on the 3 L pack) is 13 cents.

Update

MULTI-DISC CD PLAYERS

CHOICE, March 1996

In the article *Multiple music* we said that one of the advantages of a cartridge multi-disc system was the ability to transfer your disc selection from your home player to your car (providing the systems were compatible). Unfortunately this is no longer the case. The manufacturers which make cartridge systems no longer make compatible systems for home and car.

Can you help?

WEDDING VIDEOS AND PHOTOS

You're really looking forward to reliving the memories of your big day, only to find the photos and video are terrible, or missed half the people who came, or worse still were ruined!

We would like to hear of your good and bad experiences with wedding photos and videos. What — if any — package deal you received, whether the resulting photos and video were value for money, whether the company behaved in a professional manner on the day, and any little 'incidents', humorous or otherwise.

Please write to *Weddings*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or fax (02) 558 9341, by June 30, 1996.

WHERE TO BUY A COMPUTER

If you've recently bought a new or secondhand computer, we'd like to hear about your experiences — both good and bad — for a report in our new magazine, *Computer CHOICE*, which will be launched in September.

We'd like to know:

- The type of computer you bought and how much you paid.
- Where you bought it (computer shop, computer superstore, department store, auction, classifieds, etc) and when.
- Any problems you've had with your computer, and whether you were happy with the service and support provided.

Please write to *Computer CHOICE*, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or fax (02) 558 9341, by June 30, 1996.

CONVEYANCING

We'd like to hear from you if you've recently bought a property and can tell us about your experiences with conveyancing. In particular we'd like to know:

- Did you choose a lawyer or a conveyancer, and why? How much did it cost?
- Were you satisfied with the service?
- How much did it cost? Was that more, less or what you expected?
- If you did the conveyancing yourself, did you use a kit? Was it useful?
- Where was the property you bought (name of suburb and postcode) and what did it cost?

Please write to *Conveyancing*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or fax (02) 558 9341, by June 30, 1996.

Thank you for your help.

ACCC CRACKS ITS WHIP

EGGS, EXERCISE BIKES, sunglasses and the weather may seem to have little in common, but a number of businesses dealing in them have recently felt the sting of the new Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

The Trade Practices Commission and the Prices Surveillance Authority merged last November to become the ACCC — and it has been busy cracking its whip ever since.

Surprisingly, one of the first to feel the heat was the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, which the ACCC alleged had misused its market power for anti-competitive purposes.

The ACCC claimed the Bureau had refused to supply basic meteorological information to a competitor, the New Zealand-based MetService International, in order to prevent MetService from offering competing meteorological services.

On the product safety front, the ACCC launched action against the company Nordic Lust (trading as City Pro Sport & Fitness), which supplies the York 2500 exercise cycle. The ACCC believes the cycle doesn't comply with the mandatory Australian Standard for exercise bikes, alleging it has inadequate guards and two points where children could permanently damage their fingers.

At time of writing these cases are still before the court, with final decisions yet to be made.

The ACCC also sought permanent injunctions and corrective advertising orders against several producers of eggs enriched with Omega-3 fatty acids, including Heart Smart, The Safe Egg, Omegga Egg and Megga, alleging they had made false or misleading claims about the eggs' health benefits.

The eggs were claimed to be beneficial to the heart because they contained increased levels of Omega-3, which may reduce blood pressure. But the ACCC said this was misleading because there was no medical proof of this to date, and that Omega-3 eggs still contained normal amounts of cholesterol, making it unwise for people to eat more of them than they would regular eggs.

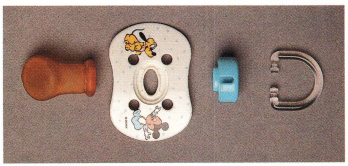
These cases were recently settled out of court, with producers undertaking to change the name of the eggs, implement testing procedures to determine Omega-3 levels and cease making misleading claims of health benefits.

Consumers may also be aware of the ACCC's recent crackdown on the sunglasses market, which a spot check found a large number of styles that didn't comply with the Australian Standard. Even health sector professionals are now under the ACCC's wary eye, having been advised to familiarise themselves with the Trade Practices Act — to which they will soon be subject.

While these are just a few of the ACCC's recent cases, it's good to see it hasn't been bogged down by bureaucracy and red tape and is getting on with the job.

'Safe eggs' — just one of the products to come to the ACCC's attention.

MORE DUMMY SPITS ...



Five different dummies have now been recalled.

SINCE OUR CALLS LATE LAST year and early this year to have the baby dummy industry investigated, three more dummies have been recalled, making a total of five that have been removed from the market.

In February CHOICE we reported on the first two dummy recalls — the **DUBBY BABY'S DUMMY with Thermometer** and the **DISNEY BABIES Orthodontic Comforter** — the latter of which the Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs asked to be recalled only after much pushing by CHOICE and a distressed mother.

At the time, the Federal Bureau promised to randomly test dummies on the market to see if they met with the voluntary Australian Standard, and to check if the Standard itself needed updating. This came after we pointed out the Standard may not be stringent enough to ensure dummies are safe.

We think an updated Standard should be mandatory, to give greater assurance that dummies are safe for your baby to use.

Since February, three more dummies have been recalled (reported in March, April and May CHOICE on our *Recalls and bans* pages inside the back cover). These were the **BABY DAYS Decorated New Orthodontic Soother** and **Cherry Soother**, and the **BEBELLE Regular Soother** (baby size).

At the time of writing (late April), the Bureau told us the promised test of dummies was still scheduled to start soon. Some 10 different widely available dummies will be tested to destruction. These include dummies about which the Bureau has received complaints, although they declined to tell us how many of the 10 had been complained about. We await the results with curiousity and will keep you posted.

Regardless of test results, always remember to check the condition of your baby's dummy, by doing the following:

- Before each use, tug on the teat and ring to make sure they're secure, and check the teat for signs of wear and tear.
- If something heavy has been placed on the dummy or it's been stepped on, check for cracks and damage — or better still, throw it away.
- As a rule of thumb, throw away any dummy that's worn or damaged and don't leave any dummy in direct sunlight.

TOOT TOOT

THE AUSTRALIAN SECURITIES Commission (set up to help investors and companies and as a corporate crime watchdog) has launched a new investor telephone hotline and World Wide Web site on the Internet.

Unfortunately the hotline won't give you hot tips on the shares to buy, but it can tell you whether an adviser you're considering using is allowed to give investment advice. It can also provide advice on shareholders' rights.

The hotline is also open to whistleblowers to report suspected corporate crime in confidence, and can help small businesses deal with the complex area of corporate law.

You can contact the ASC's hotline on 1300 300 630, or find them at http://www.asc.gov.au/ on the Web.

They say prevention is the best cure — so if you want to protect your car from being stolen, consider having an engine immobiliser installed.

Keeping car thieves grounded

THE BEST SECURITY for your car is a passive-arming engine immobiliser with at least two cut-out points.

ENGINE IMMOBILISERS

A **passive-arming engine immobiliser** prevents the engine from being started and the car being driven away (although it won't protect the contents of your car). 'Passive-arming' means it comes on automatically within about 30 seconds of the key being taken out of the ignition, or after the key is removed and the driver's door is closed. Either way, if your memory fails, your immobiliser won't!

For an immobiliser to be effective, it must be connected to — and able to cut — at least two of the following independent electrical circuits:

- The starter.
- The ignition.
- The fuel system.

One cut-off point is not enough, as the thief may still be able to override it and steal the car. Many DIY immobilisers only have one cut-off and can be ineffective for this reason.

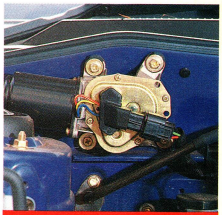
There are also systems that allow the thief to start the car and drive for less than a minute before the engine cuts out, but this is dangerous for other traffic and could result in damage to your car.

INSTALLATION

The cost of having an immobiliser with two cut-offs installed in your car can range from $300 to $1000.

Immobilisers can be installed by car alarm companies and some auto electricians. Alarm companies usually advertise in the Yellow Pages or in newspapers. Some offer a mobile service and will come to your office or home.

Ring at least three companies for quotes before deciding on one, and make sure the price includes installation and all the features you want. It usually takes between 30 minutes and four hours to install an immobiliser, depending on how complex it and the car's system are.



An engine immobiliser is the only really effective method of protecting your car from being stolen. If you're forgetful, get one that sets itself automatically.

If the batteries in your remote go flat, you could be left stranded. A keypad system is one alternative, but they're becoming less common.

IS FACTORY-FITTED BETTER?

Factory-fitted immobilisers in new cars are claimed to be better than those fitted after the car is bought, because they match the car's electrical system and computer.

Nevertheless, it's still worth installing one in an older car to keep it safe — they can be installed in new and old cars alike.

The NRMA in NSW ranks the effectiveness of new cars' security systems, including any immobiliser installed as standard — see page 8 for their latest 'theftability' scores.

WARRANTIES

Warranties for immobilisers usually range from 12 months to three years, or may be 'lifetime', lasting the duration of your ownership of the car. New cars with factory-fitted immobilisers have their warranty incorporated into the car's overall 'new car' warranty.

CAR ALARMS

Car alarms are another form of security, although there has been some debate about their effectiveness. Much to their detriment, car alarms have developed a 'boy who cried wolf' reputation — genuine alarms are often ignored because people believe they're a false alarm. As a result, an alarm on its own may not guarantee your car's protection.

If you want a car alarm, team it up with an immobiliser. This is a package many companies already offer. If your car already has an immobiliser, it's possible to upgrade it by adding an alarm, and vice versa.

WHAT YOU GET AND WHAT YOU PAY FOR

Car alarms can cost anything from $200 to $1200, and generally it's a case of 'you get what you pay for' — more features for more money. If you buy an alarm, make sure it's certified as made according to the voluntary Australian Standard. This will ensure it meets a min-imum standard.

The most effective alarms will have the following features:

- Separate triggers on all doors, the bonnet and the boot.
- The alarm sounds if any of the above are opened, if glass is broken, or if there is interior movement.
- The alarm has a stand-by rechargeable battery which automatically recharges and has a warning light to indicate if it's going flat.
- A flashing light on the dashboard to indicate an alarm is fitted, and window stickers (which do *not* state the alarm type or make).
- An alarm that is independent of the car horn (which can be easily disconnected),

COMMONLY STOLEN CARS

These are the 10 most commonly stolen cars in each state, in descending order (year of model manufacture was not available for all states, but it was generally the older models that were stolen). *

■ACT and NSW:
Holden Commodore/Calais VN.
Holden Commodore/Calais VB-VL.
Ford Falcon/Fairmont XD-XF.
Ford Falcon/Fairmont EA.
Ford Laser KA-KE.
Honda Civic.
Toyota Corolla.
Mazda 626/Ford Telstar.
Toyota Hilux
Mitsubishi Magna TM-TP.

■NT:
Holden Commodore.
Toyota Landcruiser.
Ford Falcon.
Holden Kingswood.
Toyota Hilux.
Toyota Corolla.
Holden Torana.
Toyota Corona.
Holden Gemini.
Mitsubishi Triton.

■Queensland:
Ford Falcon.
Holden Commodore.
Ford Fairmont.
Mazda 626.
Toyota Corolla.
Toyota Landcruiser.
Toyota Celica.
Mazda 323.
Mitsubishi Magna.
Toyota Camry.

■SA:
Ford Falcon.
Holden Commodore VH.
Ford Fairmont.
Holden Commodore VK and VL.
Ford Falcon.
Holden Gemini.
Holden Torana.
Mazda 626.
Ford Laser.
Chrysler Sigma GL.

■Tasmania:
No statistics available.

■Victoria:
Holden Commodore** VB, VC, VH, VK, VL.
Holden Calais VK, VL.
Holden Gemini Coupé.
Holden Statesman Caprice.
Alfa Romeo AlfaSud Coupé.
Ford Galaxy and Landau, LTD.
Ford Falcon XD, XE, XF.

■WA:
Holden Commodore.
Ford Laser.
Ford Falcon.
Mazda 626.
Toyota Corolla.
Ford Fairmont.
Ford Telstar.
Mazda 323.
Holden Gemini.
Toyota Corona.

* *Information from state motoring organisations or state police.*
** *Various models of Commodore ranked 1, 3, 5 and 9 in the list.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OPEN ROAD

Older Commodores are a prime target for theft in most states.

and meets the requirements of state noise control regulations.

- Car lights (except for headlights) flash when alarm goes off.
- The alarm can be turned on and off from outside the car.
- If the alarm switches on automatically, a service mode to prevent it going off when the car is being worked on.
- The alarm resets automatically after going off (under specific conditions — see *Hell's bells*, opposite).
- A warranty lasting at least 12 months — the longer the better. Some alarms have lifetime warranties, lasting the duration of your ownership of the car. These are not transferable to the car's new owner.

Overall, fewer features could mean lower cost but you need to decide which you're prepared to sacrifice.

REMOTELY DIFFICULT

Remotes can be used to arm or deactivate an alarm system or to deactivate an immobiliser, and may be connected to central locking. If the battery in your remote goes flat, you may not be able to deactivate your alarm or immobiliser, leaving you stranded.

For this reason, you might want to consider getting a remote-controlled alarm or immobiliser with an additional key that can switch it off directly. Manufacturers are also working on types of remote control that don't require batteries.

If you have a security system that requires a remote control, change the batteries every nine months or at the first sign of the battery running down (if you need to press more than once, or the light on the control is dim or not showing).

OTHER SECURITY OPTIONS

The following security options are cheaper than an alarm/immobiliser combination, but aren't likely to stop a determined thief stealing your car. They may act as a deterrent if someone is just

NRMA 'theftability' scores. Many new cars come fitted with some form of security, and the NRMA assesses them on how 'theftproof' they are. The higher the score, the better the rating, which is based on ease of entry, ignition lock switch construction, engine immobiliser or alarm fitted as standard, and stereo security provided by the manufacturer. The list has been condensed to the latest models only and is representative of models available as of March/April, 1996.

Table 1. NRMA 'theftability' scores

Manufacturer/model*	MAXIMUM SCORES Entry (20)	Ignition (20)	Immobiliser (40)	Alarm (10)	Stereo (10)	Total (100)
SMALL CARS						
VW Golf	16	20	40	0	9	85
Honda Civic	9	10	40	0	10	69
Seat Ibiza	16	18	0	0	5	39
Nissan Micra	11	15	0	0	8	34
Nissan Pulsar	11	15	0	0	8	34
Ford Laser	15	13	0	0	5	33
Ford Festiva	9	17	0	0	5	31
Mazda 323/Astina	15	13	0	0	3	31
Renault 19	11	12	0	0	8	31
Toyota Corolla	14	12	0	0	5	31
Ford Laser Lynx	12	13	0	0	5	30
Holden Barina	15	5	0	0	9	29
Hyundai Excel	11	17	0	0	0	28
Mazda 121	10	15	0	0	0	25
Subaru Impreza	11	14	0	0	0	25
Mitsubishi Lancer	11	13	0	0	0	24
Suzuki Baleno	7	9	0	0	6	22
Daihatsu Charade	7	10	0	0	0	17
Daihatsu Applause	6	10	0	0	0	16
Daewoo Cielo	6	5	0	0	0	11
Suzuki Swift	7	3	0	0	0	10
Daihatsu Centro	2	7	0	0	0	9
MEDIUM CARS						
Toyota Camry	17	13	40	1	5	76
VW Passat	8	18	40	0	9	75
Mitsubishi Magna	11	10	40	0	10	71
Seat Cordoba	16	18	0	0	5	39
Volvo 440	16	18	0	0	0	34
Hyundai Lantra	12	14	0	0	7	33
Hyundai Sonata	16	10	0	0	7	33
Mazda 626	14	16	0	0	3	33
Peugeot 405	10	12	0	0	8	30
Ford Mondeo	15	9	0	0	5	29
Honda Accord	6	13	0	0	10	29
Nissan Bluebird	13	15	0	0	0	28
Proton Wira	12	8	0	0	5	25
Mitsubishi Galant	12	11	0	0	0	23
Subaru Liberty	10	12	0	0	0	22
Daewoo Espero	9	5	0	0	5	19
LARGE CARS						
Ford Falcon/Fairmont	15	16	40	0	10	81
Holden Berlina	15	15	40	1	10	81
Holden Commodore	15	15	40	0	10	80
Ford Taurus	7	4	40	1	8	60

* New cars, as at March/April 1996.

looking for *any* car, rather than your particular make or model. You could also use them as a further deterrent in combination with an alarm and/or immobiliser.

■ **Ignition lock shields:** These can't be used on all cars, but they're a reliable and low-priced security device. They are a metal cover that fits over either just the ignition lock or the lock and the wiring, to prevent the car being hot-wired and driven away. They suit some models of Holden Commodore, Mazda, Ford Falcon and Laser, and Toyota Lexcen.

■ **Steering (and other control) locks:** In our experience, many steering locks are easy to defeat, although in our current test we could recommend a number. See *Car control locks* starting on page 11.

■ **Parking barriers:** These folding metal barriers are fixed into concrete behind your normal car parking space, preventing the car from being driven away. They're only useful if there is a barrier such as a wall or posts to the front and sides of the car. Again, they won't stop your car being broken into.

■ **Faceless audio equipment:** Good audio equipment is regularly targeted by thieves. To deter them, the best option is a radio-cassette deck with a removable 'face' (the outer panel featuring the controls). These 'faces' are small enough to fit into a bag or pocket and the radio is useless without them. Another alternative is where the whole radio-cassette deck is

Car audio equipment is a popular target for thieves. A removable control panel is a good deterrent — the equipment is useless without it.

STATS BY STATE

In most states, joyriding is the primary reason why cars are stolen, accounting for between 20% and 50% of all thefts.

Most cars are stolen straight off the street, particularly in Victoria: 12,685 cars were stolen in this way there in 1994, compared to 7991 in NSW and 3959 in SA.

Not surprisingly, car parks are also popular targets, especially in NSW, where 4901 such thefts took place in 1994, compared to 1825 in Victoria and 1909 in WA.

Thieves in WA obviously like residential targets, because they stole 7225 cars from homes in 1994, compared to 4126 in Victoria and 2671 in NSW.

Airport terminals were rich pickings in Victoria and WA, where 1588 and 715 cars were stolen respectively, but in NSW only 37 disappeared this way, and in SA only seven.

Retail areas were also very popular in Victoria and WA, where 4285 and 2041 cars respectively were stolen from them. In Tasmania 137 went this way, which is relatively high considering the smaller population.

HELL'S BELLS

It's two in the morning and you're fast asleep, when suddenly the piercing sound of your neighbour's car alarm shocks you awake. "Damn, another false alarm," you snarl, yanking the pillow over your head.

Sound familiar? The NSW Environment Protection Authority was so concerned by the disruption false alarms were causing that last year it proposed having car alarms banned completely. This finally worried the industry enough to begin negotiations with the EPA for a compromise.

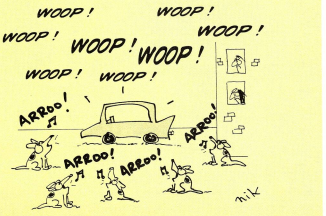
The result is that car alarms will be restricted to sounding for 45 seconds (currently the maximum is 90 seconds) in all cars in NSW built after September 1, 1997.

Triggered alarms often automatically reset themselves and continue cycling, sometimes for hours. This may be because the alarm is faulty, but it can also happen if the car is broken into and a door left open, for example.

The Australian Car Alarm Traders Association has established a joint 24-hour community hotline in NSW with the EPA. The hotline was due to have been launched by the time you read this; the contact number is (02) 713 2081. It allows people to register complaints about excessively long false alarms and seek advice on what to do about them.

If more than one legitimate complaint about a particular alarm is received, it is passed onto the EPA, which writes to the car's owner, asking for the alarm to be fixed within a set period. If the owner doesn't comply, the EPA can ask for the car to be brought in so it can test the alarm. If it then fails inspection, the EPA issues a defect notice. In extreme cases, they can also issue a fine and suspend the car's registration. The idea is to make the car owner responsible for the disruption their faulty alarm is creating.

No such system exists in the other states yet — we hope this changes in the near future.



removable, but they're bulky and you must be prepared to take it with you when you leave the car — leaving it hidden under the seat is a trick thieves are already familiar with.

■ **Wheel locks:** These only protect your wheels from being stolen, but if you have expensive tyres or alloy rims they may be a good investment.

■ **Door locks:** It's possible to replace your car's original door locks with locks that can act as a deadlock — they're more challenging for thieves to open.

■ A simple and cheap trick is to install a red flashing light on your dashboard, to make it look as if you have an alarm fitted. It might work as a deterrent if you're lucky.

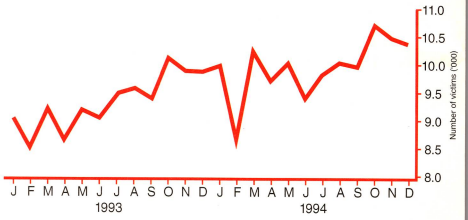


Table 2. Victims of motor vehicle theft in Australia by month reported/detected.
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics' *National Crime Statistics January to December 1994.*

HOW DO I PROTECT MY CAR?

Don't make life easy for a thief:

■ Always lock the doors (even if you're only away for five minutes or the car's in a locked garage).

■ Roll up the windows.

■ *Never* leave your keys in the car — not even a spare key in a hiding place.

■ If you have a garage, use it.

■ At night park in well lit areas.

■ Don't leave anything on display (especially valuables like mobile phones, sunglasses, jackets, etc — if you have to leave them in the car, put them in the boot or the glovebox).

Also, don't leave your driver's licence or registration papers in the car, because a thief can use them to create a false identity and sell the car to an unwitting buyer.

CAR SECURITY AND INSURANCE

Very few insurance companies in Australia offer incentives for fitting your car with security devices. In some other countries, such as the UK, this is commonplace.

Western Australia is the only state where discounts are commonly offered, but a spokesperson for the RACWA said this too will probably be phased out.

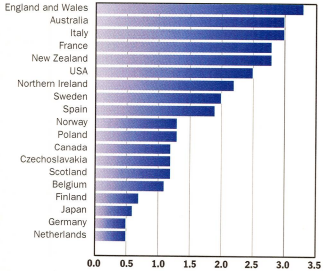
A small number of organisations in other states offer incentives, although these are few and far between. If you're really keen to find one you'll need to shop around even more than usual when buying insurance.

For advice on which security systems meet Australian Standards, or if you're buying a new or secondhand car and want to know how 'theftproof' it is, you can call your local car association's technical advice line.

The following are the contact numbers for the clubs in each state:

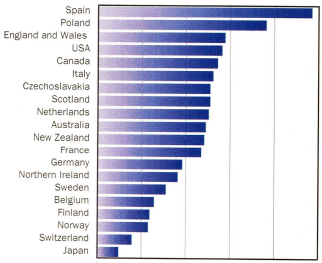
■ AANT: (089) 81 3837.
■ NRMA: (02) 292 6777.
■ RAASA: (08) 202 4689.
■ RACQ: (07) 3361 2348.
■ RACT: (002) 32 6300.
■ RACV: (03) 9790 2190.
■ RACWA: (09) 421 4260. ❑

Thefts of cars worldwide



* The percentage of car owners in these countries whose car was stolen.

Thefts *from* cars worldwide



* The percentage of car owners in these countries who were victims of theft from their cars.

Tables 3 and 4. The figures were taken from the *International Crime Survey*, compiled by The Netherlands' Ministry of Justice in 1993. They are current until the ministry releases its latest survey, due for completion later this year.

By hook or by crook

Last time we tested car control locks we could only recommend one of the 15 models tested. This time round we can recommend five. While that's an improvement, there are still 16 models on the market that can be beaten by a relatively inexperienced thief — some of them very easily, and a couple without the use of tools.

EACH TIME WE TEST car control locks some of the manufacturers and distributors complain we're being unfair; they say the locks are only meant to be visual deterrents, and furthermore what can you expect for $50 or so? Our response last time was that they weren't even working as a deterrent — schoolkids on a visit to CHOICE told us how to beat several of them, so we could be pretty sure they weren't having much effect on would-be thieves.

However, in the last test one manufacturer managed to prove it was possible to produce a lock that was not only effective but also cheap. We were unable to defeat the **AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020**, which could be purchased then for as little as $45. So this time we were hopeful we'd find more locks that are a genuine deterrent — and we did.

To break the locks we used tools that are readily available and can be easily concealed in a bag or under clothes. We limited the time we spent on each test to a few minutes — a thief wouldn't want to spend a long time trying to get the lock off, so a few minutes' resistance is all that's needed. Most of the testing was done with the locks fitted to a car.

DIFFERENT TYPES

There were six different types of car control lock in this test:

■ **Steering wheel locks:** These are the most common, with 16 models tested being of this type. They're fitted to the steering wheel and have an arm that will hit the windscreen or car pillar if the wheel is turned, preventing it from turning any further.

■ **Handbrake lock:** (One tested.) This lock is fitted permanently over the end of the handbrake and, when engaged, prevents the handbrake release button from being pressed. It can only be used on lever handbrakes, and fitting it usually involves cutting away some of the plastic moulding of the handbrake lever, which may discourage some people from buying it.

■ **Gearstick to handbrake lock:** (One tested.) This lock fits over the handbrake and then locks onto the gearstick or transmission selector. It prevents the handbrake being released and the gearstick being moved. It can only be used on cars with a handbrake between the seats and a floor-mounted gearstick or selector. It may not fit some makes of car, so ask if you can try before you buy.

■ **Steering wheel to floor lock:** The only lock of this type in the test was a long, segmented, flexible shaft that is permanently bolted to the floor of the car, usually either behind or under the driver's seat. It requires a hole to be drilled in the car's floor for the bolt. The end of the shaft locks onto the steering wheel to prevent it from being turned. When not in use it's attached by Velcro to the centre console. In very small cars, the anchor point needs to be back near the rear seat and may interfere with rear passenger comfort.

■ **Steering wheel to pedal lock:** (One tested.) A hook on one end of a telescopic shaft fits around the steering wheel, while the other end hooks around

either the brake or clutch pedal. This prevents the operation of that pedal and the turning of the steering wheel.

■ **Brake and clutch lock:** (One tested.) This lock fits around the brake and clutch pedals and is locked in position so that the pedals can't be depressed. It's not effective on automatic cars.

We tried all the locks for fit on various makes of car and had no problems with most brands. However, if you have a car that isn't very common or has an odd-sized steering wheel, it may be worth trying a lock to see that it fits before you buy it.

WHICH LOCKS WORK?

The five models that passed all our tests this time are the **AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020**, the **PREMIER CLUB** and **THE ULTRA CLUB**, one version of the **RAA Lock** and the **SOLEX NUK1000**. The first four are steering wheel locks, while the last is a brake and clutch lock (and so not effective on automatics). The **RAA Lock** is a slightly modified version of the **AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020**.

We bought two samples of each for testing. When we unpacked the **RAA Locks** we found one had the original gun-shaped cylindrical key supplied with the **AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020**, while the other had a flat key (see picture, right). We were able to pick the lock with the flat key but not the one with the cylindrical key.

The Royal Automobile Association (RAA) says it changed to the flat key after complaints about the gun-shaped handle on the cylindrical one. RAA and Aunger have since told us both the **RAA Lock** and **AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020** will be supplied with a cylindrical key with a different-shaped head, providing the same security but without the gun image. So if you're buying an **RAA Lock**, make sure you get one with a cylindrical key.

Of the remaining 16 models we tested, six required a fair amount of effort to break and might supply a degree of deterrent value. The other 10 could be defeated very easily, requiring little time and effort. We managed to defeat one lock by six different methods, and in two cases, the **EZI-LOCK** and the **AUTOLOK**, we didn't even need tools on some car models. *Putting the locks to the test*, right, lists all the models tested and what their weak points were.

Because of our tough verdicts in the past, many of the car control lock manufacturers and distributors were unwilling to co-operate with us when we tried to find out what's on the market. Consequently, some of the models we tested may no longer be available at the time of publishing, or may have changed.

The car control lock market seems to be a volatile one, with many brands and models coming and going. We surveyed stores across Australia to come up with the models to be tested, but even when buying the test samples it became apparent that some were old stock or not widely available.

When buying the Aunger Pro Lock APL-1020 or the RAA Lock, look for a cylindrical key — we could pick the lock with the flat key, but not the other one. The cylindrical key may have a gun-shaped head, while newer versions will have a more 'politically correct' form.

The changing Clubs

After we'd finished testing the locks, the distributor of the **CLUB** locks told us there were new versions of its three models we'd tested and they now had strengthened steel hooks.

The original samples had done well in our tests: we hadn't been able to beat either the **PREMIER** or the **ULTRA**, and while we could defeat the standard **CLUB,** it provided *some* resistance to a thief.

We bought the new 'improved' versions but unfortunately the 'improvements' made to the locks seemed to have been countered on two of them by changes for the worse in other areas. The **PREMIER CLUB** was still unbeatable.

The standard **CLUB** had changed from a star key to a flat key, and we could pick the lock easily. And on **THE ULTRA CLUB**, the lock housing was now attached to the shaft by three small tack welds instead being a one-piece casting. The housing was very easily snapped off, allowing the lock to be removed from the steering wheel.

Again we contacted the distributor, only to be told **THE ULTRA CLUB** had undergone another change. The lock had reverted to having one-piece cast housing, while still keeping the other improvements previously made.

We tested this new version and it passed all our tests. It's now recommended, as this should be the version available in the shops at the time of publication.

The moral seems to be to take care when buying any of the **CLUB** models that they are the latest versions that we tested. They can be identified by the labelling: "Improved, now with solid steel unbreakable hooks". Unfortunately, both the good and bad versions of **THE ULTRA CLUB** carry this labelling, so look for the version with the cast housing — if you can see any tack welds, don't buy it.

WHAT TO BUY

AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020	$48
PREMIER CLUB	$57
RAA Lock	$55
SOLEX NUK1000*	$70
THE ULTRA CLUB	$40

* Not suitable for automatics.

Putting the locks to the test

Brand/model	Lock picked	Bent steering wheel	Broken / bent	Hit with hammer	Forced with screwdriver	Cut with hacksaw	Disabled lock with slide hammer	Other successful methods
GOOD PERFORMERS (in alphabetical order — equal within group)								
AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020								
PREMIER CLUB					nt			
RAA Lock	✘ *(A)*							
SOLEX NUK1000		nt						
THE ULTRA CLUB								
OFFERING SOME DETERRENT VALUE BUT ABLE TO BE DEFEATED (in alphabetical order — equal within group)								
AUNGER Prolock 2 APL-2025	✘ *(B)*		✘		nt			
BEST Auto Anchor	✘				✘ *(D)*			Anchor bolt can be undone by hand once screwdriver relieves tension *(D)*
METRO Stoplock Compact					✘			
MINDER Ultra MIN59	✘ *(B)*		✘		nt			
PRICE BRAND Auto Lock CS38			✘	✘	nt	✘		
PROTECTOR PRO 65			✘	✘				
POOR PERFORMERS (in alphabetical order — equal within group)								
AUTOLOK S26		nt	✘	nt	✘	✘		Unscrewing gear knob successful on some cars *(C)*
CLUB The Club	✘			✘				
COPLOCK CLK 007	✘	nt	nt	✘		✘	nt	
EZI-LOCK EZ1760			✘ *(C)*		nt			
FORTRESS FORT 65	✘		✘	nt	nt		✘	
HANDCUFF CL-1008	✘		✘	✘	✘	✘	✘ *(E)*	
KENCO Double Lock	✘		✘		✘	✘	✘	
LION The Claw LA231A5			✘	✘	nt	✘	✘	
MINDER MIN 58	✘ *(B)*		✘	✘	nt	✘		
SOLEX NUK084		✘	✘	✘	nt	✘		

nt The test was not performed either because it was not appropriate for this lock or because it was no longer possible to do so due to damage from previous tests.
(A) Flat key version only — see *Which locks work?*, left, for details.
(B) One sample failed, the second passed.
(C) With bare hands — no tools required.
(D) Cable still padlocked to steering wheel so driving would be difficult. See additional information below.
(E) The lock that fits onto the rim of the steering wheel failed. The lock for adjusting length passed.

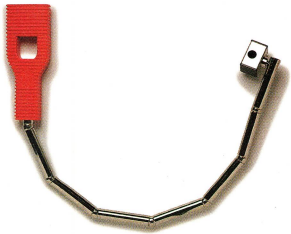
Best Auto Anchor: differing results

We were able to defeat the **BEST Auto Anchor** (which is permanently bolted to the floor of the car at one end and is locked over the steering wheel at the other) in a little less than five minutes. The manufacturer disputed this result and claimed it couldn't be done. We told them how we did it; they repeated the test but claimed it took 11 minutes to defeat the lock and was extremely difficult to do.

It seems the degree of difficulty and time taken is dependent on where the lock is anchored to the floor of the car. We fitted it according to the instructions — behind the driver's seat with enough free movement to allow easy fitting of the lock to the steering wheel. If the lock is anchored to the floor so there's very little free play in the cable when it's attached to the wheel, it will be much harder to remove by force. This may be how the manufacturer fitted it for their test.

The instructions we had don't address this problem, so potentially someone could install the lock with a lot of free play, possibly allowing it to be removed even faster than we managed.

The instructions do give other anchoring points, such as under the seat. These alternative positions may make it much more difficult



to forcibly remove the lock. Whether you can use these other mounting points will depend on the model of your car.

If you do buy one of these locks, try to ensure when you fit it that when it's connected to the steering wheel there is as little free play in the cable as possible. Leave just enough for easy connection to the steering wheel.

Car locks

Brand/model	Type of lock	Manufacturer/distributor	Origin	Target price ($)*	Warranty	Dimensi (mm)**
GOOD PERFORMERS (in alphabetical order — equal within group)						
AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020	Steering wheel	Aunger Plastics	Taiwan	48	Repair or replace	375
PREMIER CLUB	Steering wheel	Sperling Enterprises	Taiwan	57	Not stated	515
RAA Lock	Steering wheel	RAA of SA	Taiwan	55 *(E)*	Not stated	375
SOLEX NUK1000 *(A)*	Brake and clutch *(A)*	Nice Products	Not stated	70	Not stated	365
THE ULTRA CLUB	Steering wheel	Sperling Enterprises	China	40	90 days replacement	500
OFFERING SOME DETERRENT VALUE BUT ABLE TO BE DEFEATED (in alphabetical order — equal within group)						
AUNGER Pro Lock 2 APL-2025 *(B)*	Steering wheel	Aunger Plastics	Taiwan	30	Repair or replace	490
BEST Auto Anchor	Steering wheel to floor	Best Security Group	Australia	75	Repair or replace	925
METRO Stoplock Compact *(C)*	Steering wheel	RKS	UK	50	Refund if faulty	510
MINDER Ultra MIN59	Steering wheel	Haigh Australia	China	60	Not stated	570
PRICE BRAND Auto Lock CS38	Steering wheel	Haigh Australia	China	26	Not stated	390
PROTECTOR PRO 65	Steering wheel	Haigh Australia	China	40	Not stated	605
POOR PERFORMERS (in alphabetical order — equal within group)						
AUTOLOK S26	Gear lever to handbrake	Autolok Security Products	UK	75	Not stated	335
CLUB The Club	Steering wheel	Sperling Enterprises	China	36	90 days replacement	490
COPLOCK CLK 007	Handbrake	Robarde International *(D)*		50	Not stated *(F)*	
EZI-LOCK EZ1760 *(C)*	Steering wheel	Haigh Australia	China	40	Not stated	410
FORTRESS FORT 65 *(C)*	Steering wheel	Haigh Australia	China	34	Not stated	620
HANDCUFF CL-1008	Steering wheel	Not known	Taiwan	34	Not stated	605
KENCO Double Lock	Steering wheel	Not known	Taiwan	40	Not stated	570
LION The Claw LA231A5	Steering wheel	Lion (Aust) Consolidated	China	40	Not stated	380
MINDER MIN 58	Steering wheel	Haigh Australia	China	40	Not stated	530
SOLEX NUK084	Steering wheel to pedal	Nice Products	Not stated	80	Not stated	335

* Prices shown are a good target to aim for when shopping around, based on nationwide checks in February 1996.
** Minimum length for storage to nearest 5mm.
(A) Not suitable for automatics.
(B) Known as the Aunger Prolock SS from March 1996.
(C) The manufacturer says this model will be discontinued.
(D) We bought two locks; one made in Taiwan, the other in Australia.
(E) $70 for non-members of RAA. The price includes a security window etching kit.
(F) This model is permanently fitted to the car and replaces the grip on the handbrake.
(G) Fitted permanently to car; not adjustable.
(H) Internal diameter of steering wheel.
(J) For different pedal shapes and sizes.
(K) For different thicknesses of steering wheel.
(L) Distance from end of handbrake to gear lever.
(M) Distance from steering wheel to foot pedal.

Profiles

AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020: A fairly compact steering wheel lock with a square cross-section. Easy to use, with pushbutton locking.

PREMIER CLUB: An easy-to-use self-locking steering wheel lock. Fits a wide range of different-sized steering wheels.

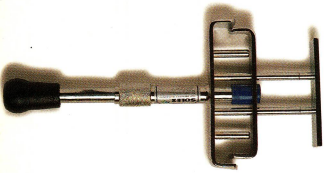
RAA LOCK: A fairly compact steering wheel lock with a square cross-section. Easy to use, with pushbutton locking. Virtually identical to the AUNGER Pro Lock APL-1020.

1 Fits into glovebox	2 Adjustment range (mm)	3 Claims to pay your insurance excess	Brand/model
✓	245 to 353 *(H)*	✓ (to $1500)	**AUNGER** Pro Lock APL-1020
	230 to 420 *(H)*	✓ (to $1500)	**PREMIER CLUB**
✓	245 to 353 *(H)*		**RAA** Lock
✓	3 positions *(J)*		**SOLEX** NUK1000 *(A)*
	230 to 415 *(H)*	✓ (to $1000)	**THE ULTRA CLUB**
	228 to 438 *(H)*	✓ (to $1000)	**AUNGER** Pro Lock 2 APL-2025 *(B)*
(G)	*(G)*	✓ (to $1500)	**BEST** Auto Anchor
	3 positions *(K)*		**METRO** Stoplock Compact *(C)*
	265 to 397 *(H)*	✓ (to $500)	**MINDER** Ultra MIN59
✓	290 to 380 *(H)*	✓ (to $500)	**PRICE BRAND** Auto Lock CS38
	263 to 372 *(H)*	✓ (to $500)	**PROTECTOR** PRO 65
✓	162 to 237 *(L)*		**AUTOLOK** S26
	225 to 422 *(H)*	✓ (to $500)	**CLUB** The Club
(F)	*(F)*		**COPLOCK** CLK 007
✓	300 to 397 *(H)*		**EZI-LOCK** EZ1760 *(C)*
	282 to 418 *(H)*		**FORTRESS** FORT 65 *(C)*
	260 to 370 *(H)*		**HANDCUFF** CL-1008
	235 to 355 *(H)*		**KENCO** Double Lock
✓	295 to 390 *(H)*	✓ (to $500)	**LION** The Claw LA231A5
	180 to 442 *(H)*	✓ (to $500)	**MINDER** MIN 58
✓	555 to 804 *(M)*		**SOLEX** NUK084

1 Fits into glovebox
The models ticked will fit in the glovebox of a Holden VN Commodore for storage, and would probably also fit in cars of a similar size. None would fit in the glovebox of a Suzuki Swift. Car control locks can be dangerous items in the event of an accident. If they don't fit in your glovebox you need to store them in a secure position, preferably in the boot.

2 Adjustment range
The locks will fit a range of different types of car, but there may be some models they don't fit. Use the dimensions given to see if the lock you're interested in will fit your car, and if you're doubtful try it before you buy. The footnotes to the table give more details

3 Claims to pay your insurance excess
Some companies say they'll pay your insurance excess if your car is stolen within one year of purchase of the lock, providing it was correctly fitted at the time of theft. Most require you to supply proof of purchase, the police report stating that the lock was fitted to the car and locked at the time, and a copy of your insurance policy and claim. Some also require you to produce all keys supplied with the lock.



SOLEX NUK1000: An effective brake and clutch pedal lock, although it's heavy and can be a little awkward to fit, especially until you're familiar with the required action. Take care when fitting it not to slide the self-locking handle up behind the lower panels of the dash, preventing key access for releasing the lock. We did this once and had to dismantle the dashboard to release the lock! NB. Not suitable for automatics.

THE ULTRA CLUB: An easy-to-use, self-locking steering wheel lock. Fits a wide range of different-sized steering wheels.

More than a deterrent?

While the manufacturers of these locks claim they're only intended to be a deterrent, there's evidence some consumers expect more of them — they expect them to protect their car from theft.

A CHOICE reader, Paul from Queensland, wrote to us of his tale of woe with the **PRICE BRAND Auto Lock CS38** steering wheel lock. After only a few weeks' use the lock cylinder collapsed, leaving him with the lock attached to his car. His motoring organisation mechanic couldn't do anything, and suggested trying a locksmith or the fire brigade.

Paul decided to have a go at the lock himself instead— and succeeded in less than a minute. As he said, "Although the silver part of the **Auto Lock** is made from a very strong metal, the red part can be easily cut with a saw." Our test bore this out too.

He continued, "Many people rely on the **Auto Lock** and sincerely hope it is strong enough to prevent their cars from being stolen."

So perhaps manufacturers and distributors shouldn't be so glib about deterrence being the only thing people buy their locks for — or they should make it a lot clearer in large letters on the packaging that no one should expect any more.

Milk isn't just plain milk any more. These days there's a wide range to choose from. Which types are best for you and your family?

The milky way

QUESTION: What's the nation's favourite drink? Beer? Coke? Coffee? Water?

ANSWER: None of the above. Our number one choice is milk. In fact, on average we each drink more than 100 litres of milk a year.

IS IT GOOD FOR YOU?

Milk is a cheap and readily absorbed source of calcium, protein, vitamins (particularly vitamin B_2 or riboflavin) and minerals.

It's a rich dietary source of calcium, which is essential for building strong bones and teeth. And it's not just for kids — getting enough calcium is important for adults too, because it can help reduce the rate at which bones lose calcium and get thinner as we get older.

One 250 mL glass of regular milk provides about one-third of our daily requirement for calcium, while the same amount of a calcium-enriched variety may provide more than half the recommended dietary intake.

HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED?

Nutritionists generally recommend we have two or three serves of dairy products a day, mainly because we need the calcium they provide — a serve might be a glass of milk (250 mL), a piece of cheese (35 g) or a tub of yoghurt (200 g).

However, the actual amount you need depends on what stage you are at in life. Check the National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines (right) to get a rough idea of how much calcium you should be getting each day, according to your age group.

So what does the table mean in terms of milk products? Say your ideal intake of calcium is 800 mg a day. You could easily get this from dairy foods by having two 250 mL glasses of regular or lower-fat milk (about 600 mg of calcium) and half a small tub of yoghurt (roughly 200 mg of calcium) — or simply by drinking two 250 mL glasses of calcium-enriched milk. The profiles on pages 20 and 21 tell you how much calcium is in each type of milk.

NHMRC guidelines on calcium

	Age	Recommended daily amount (mg)
Children	1-3	700
	4-7	800
Boys	8-11	800
	12-15	1200
	16-18	1000
Girls	8-11	900
	12-15	1000
	16-18	800
Men	18+	800
Women	19-54	800 (1100 if pregnant, 1200 if breastfeeding)
	54+	1000

In reality, Australians get about 70% of their daily calcium needs from dairy products, with most of the remainder supplied by grains, vegetables and canned fish with bones.

IF YOU DON'T DRINK MILK

If you don't drink milk, you can still get the calcium and other main nutrients in milk from cheese and yoghurt. And if you don't eat any dairy foods, you can get sufficient nutrients from other foods, though they may not be so easily absorbed.

■ **Calcium** is found in a range of foods, such as tinned sardines and salmon (if you eat the bones), almonds, oranges and some green vegetables. Here is the average amount of calcium a few of these non-dairy foods contain.

Food	Calcium (mg)
5 sardines	285
1/2 cup of salmon (with bones)	280
1/4 cup of almonds	95
1 cup of cooked spinach	75
1/2 cup of baked beans	45
1/2 cup of muesli	45
1 orange	40
2 slices of bread	30
1 cup of cooked broccoli	30

■ Good non-dairy sources of **vitamin B_2 (riboflavin)** include meat, liver, kidneys, canned salmon, almonds and yeast extract (Vegemite, for example).

■ Milk is also a good source of **protein**, but most of us get plenty of protein from other foods.

WHO SHOULD DRINK WHAT?

Here are the best milk choices for groups of people with special needs. If you don't fit into any of these categories, simply pick the type you like best.

■ **Babies and young children**

For babies breast is best, but if you can't or don't want to breastfeed, infant formulas are also available.

If you're selecting a formula, it's best to choose one that's dairy-based. If your baby seems unable to tolerate them, discuss other alternatives with a dietitian, doctor or nurse.

Soy formulas contain high levels of both aluminium and hormones called phyto-oestrogens, which some researchers fear might be hazardous to infants. At present the risk is only theoretical — there is no proven link between soy and infant health problems, but it's wise not to choose soy formulas as your

Storing fresh milk

Always check the use-by date when buying milk — and bear in mind that this date refers to the storage life of the unopened pack (which is usually 10 days after processing if stored below 5°C). Once opened it will go off more quickly.

Fresh milk needs to be kept cold, sealed (so it won't absorb other flavours and odours) and in the dark. Leaving milk in the sun can quickly produce a stale taste, so put it in your fridge as soon as possible — consider keeping an insulated container in your car to keep it and other chilled purchases cool on your trip home from the supermarket.

PLASTIC, CARTON OR GLASS?

Today almost 60% of our milk is sold in plastic containers and more than 40% comes in cartons. Glass milk bottles had disappeared from all states and territories until early this year, when the ACT resurrected them. State legislation requires that glass bottles be reintroduced in NSW by the end of 1996.

Plastic containers are popular because they're light and resealable, but some people worry that milk stored in them may lose nutrients through exposure to light. Exposure to fluorescent light has little effect on the milk in our supermarkets, as stock is generally turned over at least twice a day. Milk in a clear glass bottle loses half its riboflavin (vitamin B_2) after an hour in summer sun, while in a translucent plastic container half is lost after three hours in sunlight. Cardboard cartons, on the other hand, can protect against loss of nutrients from exposure to UV light. In reality, though, the National Food Authority agrees there is no evidence that loss of vitamins from milk packed in glass or translucent plastic bottles might cause nutritional problems.

Whether your milk comes in plastic, cartons or glass, it should suffer only minimal damage if you remember to return it to the fridge after use.

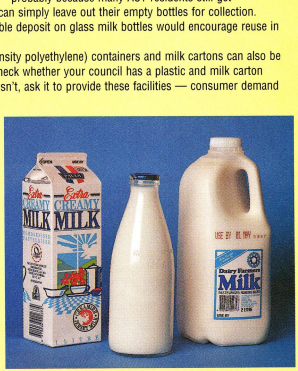
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Groups lobbying to reinstate the glass milk bottle argue a glass container is best from an environmental point of view, as it can be easily reused and recycled. The trouble is, recycling glass bottles is cost-effective only if people bother to return them to the place of purchase and each bottle is reused 10 to 12 times. Before their demise, glass bottles were generally being reused six to seven times, except for the ACT where each bottle was used 27 to 30 times — probably because many ACT residents still get home-delivered milk, and can simply leave out their empty bottles for collection. Perhaps placing a refundable deposit on glass milk bottles would encourage reuse in other areas.

Plastic HDPE (high-density polyethylene) containers and milk cartons can also be recycled in some areas. Check whether your council has a plastic and milk carton recycling scheme. If it doesn't, ask it to provide these facilities — consumer demand may get it moving.

If you live in Sydney or Melbourne, you can take your milk cartons for recycling to a BP Food Plus or BP Clean and Go car wash. In Tasmania, some Shell service stations take them.

Another way to reduce waste — if it's practical for you — is to buy milk in large containers, as small sizes mean more packaging.



first option.

Ordinary cow's milk can be introduced once your child is 12 months old. Children up to the age of two should be given regular ('whole' or full-fat) milk, as reduced-fat varieties don't provide enough energy or vitamin A. Even up to the age of five, health authorities recommend that children should have full-fat milk to ensure they get enough energy for proper growth.

■ **Adolescents**

Teenagers need lots of calcium, as bones grow rapidly at this time. If their intake of calcium is low, they may not reach their potential peak bone mass (maximum bone size and density), which can put them at increased risk of osteoporosis (brittle bones) in later life. Girls who go on diets and cut back on dairy products are particularly at risk. Regular or lower-fat milks are suitable for this group. Those with added calcium are recommended if teenagers don't have a lot of milk or other dairy products.

■ **Pregnant and breastfeeding women**

Women need more calcium during the last three months of pregnancy when their baby's bones are forming, so calcium-enriched milk is the best choice then.

Milk with added calcium is also recommended during breastfeeding, when women need about 1200 mg of calcium a day for themselves and their babies.

■ **Menopausal women**

During and after menopause, women rapidly lose bone density, placing them at increased risk of osteoporosis. Extra calcium, even at this stage of life, in conjunction with regular weight-bearing exercise (such as walking), may reduce bone loss, delay the onset of

Milk processing

Pasteurisation

All commercially produced Australian cow's milk is pasteurised. That means it's been heated to over 72°C for 15 seconds then chilled rapidly to below 5°C. This kills most bacteria (most notably those that cause the diseases bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis). The process also destroys some vitamin C and thiamine (vitamin B_1), but milk is a poor source of these nutrients anyway. The major nutrients — calcium, riboflavin and protein — aren't affected.

Homogenisation

In this method of processing, milk is forced through extremely small openings at high pressure, so that fat globules are broken up and dispersed evenly throughout the milk, instead of rising to the top as cream. Homogenisation doesn't change the nutritional value of milk, but gives it a smooth, creamy texture. All UHT, evaporated milk and milk packed in cartons is homogenised.

UHT/Long-life milk

You can now buy UHT versions of the major types of fresh milk. They don't need to be kept in the fridge until they've been opened, because they've been sterilised by the UHT (ultra-high temperature) process. The 132°C heat kills all bacteria, but doesn't affect the nutritional value of the milk.

After a few seconds of UHT treatment, it's packaged under sterile conditions in paper cartons lined with polythene or aluminium to exclude all light and oxygen (which can slowly turn milk rancid).

If kept sealed, UHT milk will keep for up to six months (though it may not last as long in very hot climates). While the milk won't go sour after that time, its taste may alter.

Coffee-flavoured milk — a real man's favourite drink

Flavour of the north

Darwinites love to drink — and not just their beer. They also seem to have a passion for flavoured milk.

Darwin has the world's highest consumption per head of a single type of flavoured milk: iced coffee in cartons. Darwin residents quaff almost 40 L each of iced coffee-flavoured milk per year.

It's not just in Darwin that flavoured milks are a hit. Nationwide their popularity is growing — as is the choice of flavours. Fancy peach or banana milk, instead of the usual chocolate or strawberry?

As well as being a refreshing drink for people of all ages, flavoured milks are a good way for children, teenagers, pregnant and breastfeeding women and anyone who doesn't like the taste of plain milk to get the nutrients milk provides.

However, while flavoured milks have similar amounts of calcium and vitamins to regular varieties, they contain added sugar. So don't put flavoured milk into your child's bottle, as it can contribute to tooth decay.

The added sugar means flavoured milks are also generally higher in kilojoules — though those made from reduced-fat milk have about the same energy content as full-cream milk, so are a somewhat healthier choice than full-fat flavoured versions.

Packaged flavoured milks are convenient — but if you want a lower-sugar milk drink, you can always whip up a fruit smoothie (milk plus plain yoghurt and fresh fruit) in your blender.

osteoporosis and help prevent the bone fractures associated with this common disease of older people. Milk is the easiest way of getting calcium, and the best choice at this stage of life would be low or reduced-fat milk with added calcium.

■ Elderly people

People may not absorb calcium so well as they get older, so the more calcium they eat the better. Elderly people need fewer kilojoules, so low or reduced-fat milk with added calcium is a good choice.

■ People trying to lose weight

If you want to lose weight, you need to reduce your kilojoule (calorie) intake and exercise regularly. If you're eating less in your efforts to shed excess kilos, you need to make sure you're still getting enough vitamins and minerals. Low-fat milk with increased calcium would be your best choice.

■ People with high cholesterol levels

People with high cholesterol levels are more likely to develop heart disease and clogged arteries. If your cholesterol readings are high, you need to reduce the amount of saturated fat in your diet, so you should choose skim or low-fat milks, which contain negligible amounts of fat.

Most people think of milk or cheese when they think of calcium — but it's also found in other foods (see *If you don't drink milk* on page 17).

Milking the market

In response to consumers' growing demands for 'healthy' foods, milk manufacturers have introduced new product ranges, from those with increased calcium, aimed at reducing the risk of osteoporosis, to those promoted as having extra protein and added iron or vitamins. But are all the new nutrient-fortified varieties really better for you? Let's take a look at some of the manufacturers' claims.

Protein top-up

First, those with added protein. All milk is rich in protein — a 250 mL serve of regular milk contains more than 8 g of protein, while the process of adding extra milk solids to calcium-increased varieties means they have somewhat higher protein levels as well as more calcium.

But for most of us, extra protein isn't necessary — we get more than enough from other foods, such as meat and fish or peas, beans and legumes. Probably only children or frail people who are poor eaters and don't eat meat or fish would benefit much from protein-enriched milk.

Iron boost and vital vitamins

The **LIFE** milks not only have extra protein and calcium but also extra iron. Milk is not a naturally rich source of iron, and even the iron-enriched varieties don't provide much readily absorbed iron — that is best obtained from meats. So if you want to buy these milks, do so because of their extra calcium rather than their iron.

How about vitamin-enriched milk? We looked at **VITA PLUS** (available in Victoria and the NT), which is fortified with vitamins A, C and D as well as some from the B group. However, all cow's milk is rich in vitamin B_2 (riboflavin) and also contains adequate vitamins A and D. Extra vitamin D is unnecessary for most Australians — we get plenty from sunlight.

Milk is not a good source of vitamin C, and even the vitamin C-enriched variety contains only a very small amount compared to other food sources, such as many fruits, juices and vegetables.

If a nutrient isn't naturally present in large amounts in a particular product, why spend more to get the same item plus a very small amount of the added nutrient? You can get all the nutrients you need by eating a variety of healthy foods.

Milk makes

These days there's a wide range of milks to choose from. In some places you can get special milks, such as one designed for making frothy cappuccinos due to its increased protein levels. Another manufacturer (Sandhurst Farms in Victoria) has organic and 'biodynamic' varieties (produced by cows fed on pastures where no artificial fertilisers or synthetic chemicals are used).

On these two pages we've listed the major makes of fresh milk available at present in each state (according to dairy authorities). It wasn't practically possible to include the products of numerous smaller regional dairies. The milks are grouped into categories depending on their calcium and/or fat levels. An 'R' indicates the milk is available only in certain regions of the state or territory listed. The nutritional information gives typical values for each type of milk and refers to a 250 mL glass of milk.

REGULAR MILK

Full-cream or whole milk is still by far the most popular milk on the market, but you should be aware that drinking a lot of it can add a significant amount of saturated fat to your diet. It contains around 4% fat.

Names: Anything labelled 'full-cream' or 'whole' milk (or simply 'milk').

Profile (per 250 mL glass):

- Energy: 690 kJ / 165 Cal.
- Fat: 9.5 g (3.8%).
- Calcium: 305 mg.

A good choice for:

- Children under five.
- People who are very active and don't need to reduce how much fat they eat.
- People who eat very little.

REDUCED-FAT

Although the composition of reduced-fat milk varies depending on the brand, in general it has similar nutritional value to regular milk but less than half its fat. It contains 1 to 2% milk-fat.

Names: DAIRY LITE LO (Queensland — R), **ENTEE LITE** (NT), **HI LO** (NSW — R, WA), **LIGHT** (NT, Queensland), **SKIMMER** (SA), **TRIM** (NT, Queensland — R).

Profile (per 250 mL glass):

- Energy: 500 kJ / 120 Cal.
- Fat: 4 g (1.6%).
- Calcium: 315 mg.

A good choice for:

- Children over five.
- Teenagers and adults who want to reduce their fat intake but find skim milk too 'thin'.

SKIM

Skim milk has had almost all the milk fat (cream) removed from it — it can't have more than 0.15% milk fat. Most of the fat-soluble vitamins A and D are removed along with the fat, though levels of other nutrients, such as calcium, protein and riboflavin, are about the same as in regular milk.

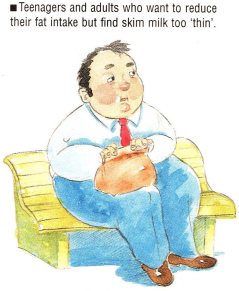
Names: Any milk labelled 'skim'. Also **SKIMMA** in NSW.

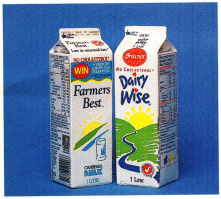
Profile (per 250 mL glass):

- Energy: 370 kJ / 90 Cal.
- Fat: 0.3 g (0.1%).
- Calcium: 300 to 340 mg.

A good choice for:

- People who need to lose weight.
- People on cholesterol-lowering diets (it's low in fat and virtually cholesterol-free).
- People who drink a lot of milk.
- It's *not* suitable for children under 5 who need the energy and vitamin A content of regular milk.





LOW IN SATURATED FAT, CHOLESTEROL-FREE

These milks are made by blending skim milk with vegetable oils rich in monounsaturated fats (which may have a beneficial effect on blood cholesterol levels). They have fewer kilojoules than regular milk and one third the fat, they're low in saturated fat and have negligible amounts of cholesterol. So they're a healthier choice for adults than whole milk. Skim milk, however, is even better — it has no cholesterol and is low in all types of fat too.

Don't think that drinking this type of milk will solve your cholesterol problems — you need to look at all the foods you eat and cut down on those high in saturated fat.

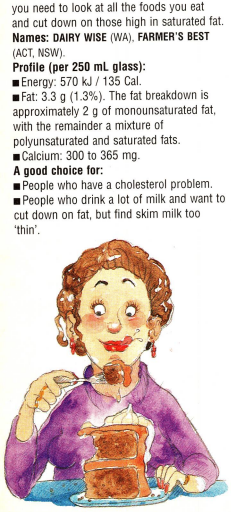
Names: DAIRY WISE (WA), **FARMER'S BEST** (ACT, NSW).

Profile (per 250 mL glass):

- Energy: 570 kJ / 135 Cal.
- Fat: 3.3 g (1.3%). The fat breakdown is approximately 2 g of monounsaturated fat, with the remainder a mixture of polyunsaturated and saturated fats.
- Calcium: 300 to 365 mg.

A good choice for:

- People who have a cholesterol problem.
- People who drink a lot of milk and want to cut down on fat, but find skim milk too 'thin'.



CALCIUM-ENRICHED

Generally these are made from reduced-fat, low-fat or skim milk with skim-milk powder added to provide extra calcium, protein and other nutrients, but no extra fat.

Low-fat, calcium enriched

Names: CALCIUM PLUS (WA), **CONTOUR** (NSW — R), **PHYSICAL SLIM** (Victoria), **SHAPE** (ACT, NT, Queensland), **SKIMMM** (SA, Tasmania), **SKINNY** (Victoria), **SLIM** (WA).

Profile (per 250 mL glass):

- Energy: 480 kJ / 115 Cal.
- Fat: 0.5 g (0.2%).
- Calcium: 375 to 515 mg.

Reduced fat, calcium enriched

Names: CANBERRA HI LO (ACT), **FORM** (Tasmania), **GARDEN CITY LITE** (NSW — R), **HI LITE** (Tasmania), **LIFE** (NSW)*, **LIGHT START** (SA, Tasmania, Victoria, WA), **LITE WHITE** (ACT, NSW, NT), **PHYSICAL** (NT, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria), **REV** (NSW — R, Victoria — R, NT), **TAKE CARE** (SA), **TRIM & TERRIFIC** (Victoria).

* This also has added iron. There is also a version using regular milk. See *Milking the market* on page 19.

Profile (per 250 mL glass):

- Energy: 520 kJ / 125 Cal.
- Fat: 3 g (1.2%).
- Calcium: 350 to 440 mg.

A good choice for:

- People who don't drink much milk, especially teenagers, women and elderly people.
- Pregnant or breast feeding women.

LACTOSE-MODIFIED

These milks have had the lactose (milk sugar) removed or reduced. Otherwise they have the same nutritional value as regular milk, except for **LACTAID**, which has the same profile as reduced-fat milk.

Names:

- **BALANCE** (UHT) — available nationwide.
- **HARVEY FRESH LACTOSE FREE** (UHT) — WA.
- **LACTAID** — NSW, NT, Queensland. UHT also available in Victoria.
- **LACTO LO** — NT, Queensland.

A good choice for:

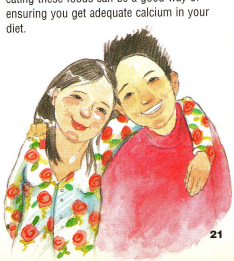
- People who experience bloating, stomach cramps, wind and diarrhoea after drinking milk because they can't digest lactose.

Most Caucasians can digest lactose throughout life because their bodies produce lactase, the enzyme which breaks down lactose, but up to 70% of the world's population stop producing it after weaning.

People whose bodies don't produce lactase don't always need low-lactose milks — they can often tolerate regular milk in small amounts, particularly if it's drunk with food.

You could also try **LACTAID** drops or tablets, available from some pharmacies, which can be added to milk to break down the lactose before you drink it.

Most lactose-intolerant people don't get any symptoms when they eat cheese (particularly hard varieties) or yoghurt, so eating these foods can be a good way of ensuring you get adequate calcium in your diet.



Other milks

Soy 'milk'

Soy drink is not really milk — it's made from soy bean protein or hulled soy beans.

The protein, fat and kilojoule levels of soy drinks are similar to those in cow's milk, but soy beverages need to be fortified with nutrients such as calcium and riboflavin (vitamin B_2) to provide similar nutritional value to cow's milk.

In our tests of soy drinks (published in CHOICE, April 1992), we found those made from whole beans were generally much lower in calcium than cow's milk, but some brands — mostly those made from soy protein — had been fortified with calcium to give them similar amounts of calcium, protein and fat to regular milk. Low-fat versions had similar amounts of fat to reduced-fat milk. Soy drinks are also cholesterol-free. We'll be looking at the claims that soy can reduce cholesterol levels in an upcoming issue of CHOICE.

Soy drinks are a good source of protein and are suitable for people who are lactose-intolerant (as they contain no lactose) and vegans, who don't eat or drink animal products. If fortified with calcium, they're also good for children who are genuinely allergic to cow's milk. However, soy protein may itself cause allergic reactions, and it's debatable whether the calcium in fortified soy milk is as easily absorbed as that in cow's milk.

Buttermilk

Traditionally, buttermilk was the liquid drained from the churn when cream was made into butter. Today it's made from low-fat or skim milk (sometimes with added regular milk) and selected bacterial cultures. Depending on the combination, it has the same food value as skim, low or reduced-fat milk. You can drink it (it tastes rather acidic) or use it in place of milk or yoghurt for cooking.

Evaporated or condensed milk

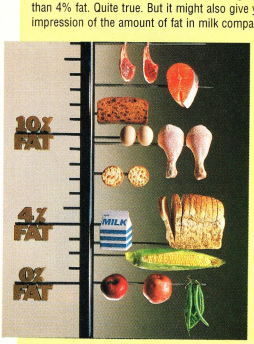
This is canned full-cream milk evaporated down to about 40% of its original volume. It can be converted back to whole milk by adding the water that's been removed (three parts water to two parts canned milk). It looks and tastes slightly different from regular milk, but its nutrient content is about the same when it's reconstituted. Sweetened condensed milk has had about 40% sugar added.

Powdered milk

Nearly all the moisture has been removed to make powdered milk. The process destroys bacteria (and they can't grow without moisture), but it doesn't alter the milk's nutritional value when reconstituted with water. Powdered milk should keep well for at least 12 months in a can if the lid is always replaced firmly and the container is kept in a cool place.

The lowdown on 'low in fat' ad

Remember this ad? The message is that regular milk contains less than 4% fat. Quite true. But it might also give you a false impression of the amount of fat in milk compared to other foods.



It might leave you thinking that two water crackers, for example, have more fat than a 300 mL carton of milk. Wrong! Although they contain a higher percentage of fat compared to their weight than milk does, they weigh much less, so the actual amount of fat in two crackers is also very much less — less than 1 g compared to almost 12 g in 300 mL of regular milk. In fact, you would need to eat 30 water crackers to get the same amount of fat. It's an unrealistic comparison, as you're hardly likely to eat 30 of these biscuits at once.

What about the bread (which contains about 3% fat)? Even if you did manage to eat nine slices of mixed grain bread in one meal (as indicated here), you would have consumed only about 7 g of fat — again less than the amount in 300 mL of regular milk.

However, that doesn't mean that milk is a high-fat food and should be avoided. If you had 300 mL of skim milk instead of regular milk, you'd have less than half a gram of fat — less than the amount in those two water crackers.

If you want to reduce your fat intake:

- Cut down on fatty foods, such as fried foods, fatty meats, cakes, pastries and many take-away foods.
- Choose skim or reduced-fat milk (you can see from our profiles on pages 20 -21 how low in fat they are).
- Select other lower-fat dairy products.
- Trim fat off your meat and choose lower-fat meats.
- Watch how much butter or margarine you use.

The dairy industry has been at pains to show us that milk isn't really a high-fat food since their customer research showed people commonly thought it was more than 30% fat! We've got the "less than 4%" message — but why use such a confusing illustration?

FOUR-YEAR INDEX

July 1992 – June 1996

Pull this index out of your copy of CHOICE and keep it as a handy reference.

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(U) Update of previous report * Additions or corrections to reports, small follow-up items, or letters

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MAJOR APPLIANCES ARE ALSO SUMMARISED ON THE BACK COVER

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Are you confused about plastics recycling?

Just because a plastic container has a plastic identification code doesn't mean it's recyclable.

IF YOU'RE LIKE MANY PEOPLE, when you see these symbols on products, you probably think they're recyclable. Think again!

These symbols are plastic identification codes (PICs): a voluntary coding system used internationally to identify the type of plastic resin used in the manufacture of a container. They're mainly useful at recycling stations for sorting used plastics. They can also help you, to a limited extent, sort which plastic bottles you can put in the recycling bin, but they're not plastic recycling codes.

The problem is, it's easy to think a package with a plastic identification code is automatically recyclable, when this is not always the case.

HAUNTINGLY FAMILIAR

The plastic codes are quite similar to the 'chasing arrows' symbol (left), which is widely recognised as meaning 'recyclable'. And perhaps that's no accident.

Manufacturers are well aware that consumers consider the environmental impact of packaging when they choose products — so any suggestion of recyclability is good for their product's image. However, in some instances consumers are being given the wrong message.

In theory all plastics can be recycled, but in reality there's no possibility that plastics other than types one, two and three will actually end up being recycled. According to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), unless a plastic container has a fair chance of being recycled, manufacturers shouldn't claim that it's recyclable.

EXTRA CONFUSION

The potential for consumers to be confused by PICs on the bottom of plastic containers is one thing, but we found they were also being used in ways the ACCC says could mislead shoppers — for example, on products accompanied by the words 'recyclable packaging' (see photo) or 'plastic recycle code' particularly when recycling facilities for the type of plastic aren't generally available.

The plastic identification code does not mean the plastic is recyclable — used this way it's potentially misleading.

EXTRA COSTS

And it's not just consumers being confused or potentially misled that's the problem. When the wrong sorts of plastic container are put in recycling bins, extra sorting is needed at the recycling plant — which adds to the cost of the whole process.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

To check if an item really is recyclable:

- First, look for the recyclable 'chasing arrows' symbol or a 'recyclable' claim on the label.
- Then check the PIC (which should only be found on the base of the container), it identifies which plastic the container is made from.
- Check if your local council offers recycling facilities for the plastic. Some supermarkets or service stations may also collect particular plastics for recycling.

Agvet chemicals: Can you help?

If you have had any reaction to or bad experiences with chemicals you have used, or have opinions on the labelling, registration, use, misuse or availability of household, garden and pet care chemicals, we would like to know.

A community consultative committee has been established to improve communication between the community and the National Registration Authority (NRA) — the independent Commonwealth body which assesses, reviews and registers agricultural and veterinary products.

So we can express your views, our representative on this committee would like to know what you think about agricultural and veterinary chemicals. We'll keep you up-to-date with emerging chemical issues from the NRA. Please send us your views at: *Green Page*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, to arrive by the end of July.

No mad cows here, mate

The international uproar over mad cow disease continues and some Australians might still be concerned about the possible risks.

FORTUNATELY FOR AUSTRALIANS, it seems our beef is free of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) — more colourfully known as 'mad cow' disease.

There has never been a case of BSE in Australia, and it's unlikely there'll ever be one — thanks to our stringent quarantine laws.

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE

Action by the previous Australian government means there has been no importation of live cattle, cattle semen or cattle embryos since 1988. Fresh and frozen British beef has also been banned for a number of years.

The current government also deserves credit for the prompt action it took in establishing a BSE taskforce to determine which foods posed a risk, and to act as an information service for the hundreds of queries pouring in.

However, our government should learn from BSE in Britain — caution is needed when moving away from traditional farming techniques.

WHAT NOT TO EAT

Of course, while we have no mad cow disease here, there are some food products on sale in Australia which contain beef products from British cattle. The Australian taskforce has been urgently assessing foods imported from Britain, looking for those which may pose a risk, however small.

At the time of going to press (late April), the products withdrawn from sale in Australia were:

- TESCO Meat Gravy Granules 300 g.
- TESCO Scotch Broth Soup 425 g.
- BAXTERS Scottish Haggis.
- BAXTERS Highland Broth Soup 425 g.
- BENDER AND CASSELL Cream of Broccoli Soup.

WHAT'S SAFE

The taskforce considers all other British products pose a negligible risk, including TV dinners, sausage casings, Bovril, chocolates, dairy products and products containing gelatine.

Pharmaceuticals and cosmetics originating in Britain have also been assessed (because they're products which may contain beef fats), and are considered not to pose a risk.

WHAT IS BSE?

BSE is a fatal brain disease mainly found in cattle over two years old, and is believed to be caused by an infectious protein called a prion.

Although scientific knowledge in this area is still incomplete, it's believed prions infect other proteins and cause them to clump together, resulting in distinctive holes in the brain. BSE is similar to a disease found in sheep called scrapie, and the central theory goes that cows probably contracted it after eating meat meal (processed meat scraps) containing the remains of scrapie-infected sheep.

However, humans have never contracted scrapie, despite being known to have eaten sheep with the disease. And there's no definitive proof that we can contract BSE either. However there's also no proof we can't.

AUSSIE BEEF

The conditions in Britain which are thought to have resulted in BSE don't in general exist in Australia.

Because Australia has so much land, we raise our cattle 'free-range', so most eat grass rather than meat meal. In cases where they have eaten meat meal it couldn't have been infected by scrapie, because there's none in Australia.

The last case of scrapie here was in 1952, when four sheep out of 10 imported from the UK were found to have it and were immediately slaughtered, along with all other sheep they'd come into contact with. The sheep property concerned was quarantined for a year.

A very small percentage of farmers have used meat meal in the past. However, since the recent outbreak of BSE in the UK, dairy farmers here have established a voluntary ban on the use of meat meal, which we'd like to see made mandatory for the whole industry as a further precaution.

THE LINK BETWEEN BSE AND HUMANS

Some researchers have suggested a tenuous link between BSE in cows and humans

Australian cattle are considered safe from BSE, commonly called 'mad cow disease', mainly because cattle-farming conditions here are different — see the article for details.

with a form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD). CJD is a rare brain disease which results in death after a relatively rapid period of dementia, impaired mobility and loss of speech.

CJD is very similar to BSE in that it's also thought to be caused by an infectious prion affecting the brain. The disease can take up to 30 years to incubate before symptoms are seen — so it's normally only found in people over 60.

More than 10 people in Britain have recently contracted an unusual strain of CJD, which some researchers have linked to BSE-infected beef. These people differ from typical CJD cases in that they were unusually young (ranging in age from 18 to 41), suffered anxiety and depression in the initial stages (as opposed to the usual dementia-like symptoms such as memory loss), and suffered from symptoms of the disease for over a year before dying, rather than for less than half a year.

CAN YOU CATCH CJD?

In general, there are three groups of CJD sufferers — a number of people are genetically predisposed to develop the disease, while others have contracted it from medical procedures, and still other cases occur randomly.

As far as is known, the traditional form of CJD is not highly contagious — it has only been shown to be transmitted from person to person through medical procedures no longer used in Australia, such as treatment with human pituitary hormones (stopped in 1985). It hasn't been shown to be transmitted by blood, social contact, sexual activity or from mother to child.

IF YOU'VE BEEN TO BRITAIN

The real risk of having eaten BSE-infected beef in Britain is simply not known. So unfortunately for many people, it's a case of having to wait for more information to become available. However, from 1989, when the British government implemented some safety regulations, the risks from eating British beef are thought to be very small.

Our sister organisation in the UK, the Consumers' Association, has been concerned about risks from BSE for some time. It says that although the risk is thought to be very small, no-one knows exactly how small. If you're not prepared to take that risk, the only way to avoid it is not to eat beef if you're travelling in Britain. ❑

Subscriber

DRAW

Our 20th draw will be held on July 5, 1996. Two lucky people will win prizes from tests published in CHOICE in October 1995. For new subscriptions and renewals received April 1 to June 30, 1996.

First Prize: A colour inkjet printer valued at up to $750.

Second Prize: A clothes dryer valued at up to $330.

These are products we bought for testing, so you won't be the first to turn them on or set them up. But we'll cover any service problems with a CHOICE warranty that'll match the manufacturer's — just as if you'd bought them new.

All new CHOICE subscriptions and renewals received from members and personal subscribers (including donors of gift subscriptions) by June 30 will go into the draw, unless of course you indicate you don't want to be included.

Subscriber draws are held every quarter — your renewal notice will have the details. If you're on a two-year subscription you'll be entered on your first anniversary as well as when you renew.

Use the order form overleaf

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

1. The winner will be drawn from new subscriptions and renewals from personal subscribers (including members and donors of gift subscriptions) received April 1 to June 30, 1996. If you opt for a two-year subscription, you'll be entered on your first anniversary as well as when you actually renew or subscribe. 2. Information on how to enter and prizes forms part of these conditions of entry. 3. Employees, and their immediate families, of the Australian Consumers' Association and its associated companies and agencies are ineligible to enter. 4. Entrants must be residents of Australia. 5. Applications are subject to a verification check and the judge's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The prizes will be delivered free anywhere within Australia. 7. Prizes cannot be taken as cash. 8. South Australian residents may enter the draw by completing the form and posting to: Reply Paid No. 24, ACA, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville NSW 2204, without subscribing to the magazine. Only one entry per person is permissible through this method. 9. Last date for receipt of entries to the draw is June 30, 1996. No responsibility accepted for lost, late or misdirected mail. 10. The draw will be conducted at the office of the Consumers' Association at 10 am on July 5, 1996. 11. The winner will be notified by letter and published in the earliest feasible issue of CHOICE after that. 12. The promoter is Australian Consumers' Association, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville NSW 2204. NSW permit No. PC96/0932 issued on 27/2/96, ACT Permit No. TP95/3214 issued under the Lotteries Ordinance on 22/2/96, NT permit No. NT96/0319 issued 23/2/96.

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Carpet cleaning capers

Arranging to have your carpet cleaned isn't difficult, but you have to ask the right questions.

There are two ways your carpet can be cleaned: either you hire a professional company to do it for you, or you hire a machine and do it yourself.

HIRING A COMPANY

Unless a friend has recommended a company, you'll need to select one from the dozens listed in the Yellow Pages — a daunting task. But asking the right questions can help you sort them out. Use *Carpet cleaning methods* on page 33 to decide which type of cleaning your carpets need, and then ring at least three companies for quotes.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

If the person answering the phone can't answer all your queries (some are telemarketers and don't work in the industry itself), ask to speak to a manager. If you still can't get any sensible answers, write that company off your list.

■ **What guarantees do you offer?**
The company should guarantee its work. If you're completely dissatisfied with the job, it should be prepared to do it again free of charge.

No company can guarantee to remove all stains. Stain removal is dependent on what the stain is, how old it is, how it was treated when it first happened, and what kind of carpet you have. But companies should be able to remove at least 90% of most stains. However, if a stain contains a dye, such as tea, coffee, red wine or coloured cordial, it's likely a mark will remain.

■ **Do you have insurance?**
The company should have insurance to cover the cost of any potential damage its operators may do to your home.

■ **Does your company inspect all areas to be cleaned before starting work?**
A professional operator should inspect your house with you in tow, noting in writing where stains exist, and asking how they occurred and what previous treatments they've received.

■ **What does the cost include?**
Most companies charge $20 to $25 each for the first three rooms (usually the lounge, dining and master bedroom), but discounts are often given. Some offer very cheap prices to start with, such as $9 a room, but they may turn up with a sales team to try to pressure you into paying for extras you didn't want, such as a stain-prevention coating (which costs well over $100 for an average house), deodorising and sanitising, or having your upholstery cleaned.

Even if you resist the sales team's overtures and pay only $9 a room, the job may be rushed — few companies can afford to charge such low prices and then take the time to do the work thoroughly.

When asking for a quote, give the company a realistic description of the size of your house and include any hallways, otherwise they may alter their final quote when they arrive to do the job. Many companies don't charge for small hallways under three metres long, but ask first to be sure.

Also ask if they charge for moving the furniture — they generally won't, but companies offering cheaper prices may do so. Some, which may sound cheap to start with, have even been known to charge extra per stain.

■ **How long will it take?**
While this is dependent on the size of your home, the method used and how much furniture needs to be moved, most companies take an average of one and a half to two hours for one person to clean your carpet (a two-person crew may take less than an hour). They should move all furniture back to its previous position, unless it's flat-to-the-ground, in which case it would prevent the carpet from drying.

Ask the company for details about what the job involves and methods they

A do-it-yourself machine can save you money, but it may take you several hours to clean your whole house.

use, so you know exactly what to expect. And find out how long it takes for the carpet to dry. Damp carpet is more receptive to taking up dirt from your shoes — it's better to let the carpet dry thoroughly if you can before walking on it.

DOING IT YOURSELF

If you don't want to pay a professional company, hiring a machine and doing it yourself is an alternative. You might not get quite the same results, and if you're doing your whole house it will take several hours, but it will certainly work out cheaper than paying a company.

■ **Where to get a machine:** The machines are available mostly from chain stores and some supermarkets such as Coles, KMart, Safeway and Woolworths, while hardware stores and some independent stores may also supply them.

■ **How they work:** The machines use hot water extraction (see *Carpet cleaning methods*, opposite).

■ **Cost:** On average, they cost about $24 to hire for 24 hours. The necessary chemicals cost extra — the detergent is usually about $10, but is enough for an average-sized home. A defoaming liquid costs around $6, and a spot stain remover about $7.

■ **Are they easy to use?** Read the instructions on the machine very carefully and then ask the person you're hiring it from for more information if you're still uncertain. But the machines are fairly simple to use, and if they're handled correctly you're unlikely to damage your carpet.

Try to use less detergent rather than more, because whatever moisture remains in the carpet will contain detergent residue, which attracts dirt.

■ **What if something goes wrong?** The only guarantee a do-it-yourself machine comes with is that it works. If you damage the carpet because you didn't use the machine as instructed, no one is liable except yourself.

However, if you used the machine correctly and are still dissatisfied with your carpet's appearance, contact the shop you got if from. If they can't help, contact the manufacturer and explain your problem. The major company we spoke to said it would send someone to demonstrate how to get the best results.

CARPET PROTECTORS: ARE THEY EFFECTIVE?

If you think carpet protectors like Scotchgard and Stainmaster can make your carpet invincible to stains, you're in for a disappointment.

Protectors help your carpet *resist* soiling and prevent spills from soaking in immediately. They don't provide an impenetrable barrier. Their main purpose is to slow down the staining process to give you the chance to mop up a spill before it does much damage.

Protectors are also claimed to keep your carpet cleaner for up to three times longer than if it isn't treated, by resisting walked-in soil (by stopping soil from sticking to the carpet fibres and making it easier to vacuum up).

Unfortunately, damage sometimes occurs anyway, as one consumer complained to us. Chris paid $60 to have her lounge room treated with a name-brand protector, only to find the red wine she spilt on it seemed to sink in just as quickly as before the carpet was treated, even though she attended to the spill immediately.

"I followed the instructions the operator left for me, blotting with a clean, damp sponge, and then using white vinegar, but I still have a big stain. I'm very unimpressed," she said.

Most food spills won't stain if they're attended to straightaway (see *Removing carpet stains* on page 35). However, some substances leave marks regardless of how quickly you mop them up, and need to be removed professionally — and even professional treatment may not get them out completely. These include paint, dyes (such as red wine, orange cordial, mustard and turmeric), inks, bleaches and corrosive substances. Hot drinks are also more likely to stain than cold drinks, because the heat makes them more chemically reactive.

Having a protector on your carpet doesn't mean abandoning regular maintenance and vigilance — you still need to vacuum regularly and mop up spills quickly. So if you're thinking of paying for a protector treatment to make less regular work for yourself, think twice before parting with your cash.

Don't allow babies of crawling age or pets on treated carpet till it's completely dry, and if you're subject to allergic reactions, don't walk on it in bare feet until it's dry. While it's unusual for people to react to the chemicals in protectors, it's better to be cautious while they're wet.

Carpet cleaning methods

All the professional carpet cleaning methods you'll find offered are covered by an Australian Standard. The majority of professional carpet cleaners use one of two methods: hot water extraction or bonnet cleaning.

HOT WATER EXTRACTION

■ **Also known as:** Steam cleaning, although it's hot water, not steam, that is actually used.

■ **What it involves:** The carpet is first vacuumed. The machine is then moved over the carpet, injecting a mixture of hot water, detergent and deodorant into it at high pressure and immediately sucking it back out, taking the dirt with it. Hot water extraction can be done with either a portable machine or a truck-mounted operation. The latter method is more effective as it's more powerful. It also generates its own electricity and hot water, unlike a portable machine which uses yours.

■ **Drying time:** The carpet will be damp afterwards and takes between six and 24 hours to dry, depending on the weather, how much water has been left in it, air circulation through the house, and the type of carpet.

■ **Good for:** Hot water extraction is the best method for very dirty or stained carpets, as the detergent mixture goes fairly deeply into the carpet.

Because hot water extraction minimises texture changes in carpet pile, it is particularly recommended for deep plush and shag pile carpets. It is also the recommended system for synthetic carpets which have been treated with stain-repellent finishes (such as Scotchgard or Stainmaster).

■ **Potential problems:** The main thing that could go wrong is overwetting the carpet, which might cause it to shrink if water gets right through to the backing. However, this is unlikely to happen on a carpet in reasonable condition and with an experienced operator.

However, because of the potential for overwetting, hot water extraction is not recommended on carpets which are worn or threadbare, where the backing or underlay is exposed, or where stitching is loose and the carpet is not adequately attached to the floor — the result could be shrinking as well as water marking. (See *Overwetting: what to do*, overleaf).)

Bonnet or 'dry' cleaning can be used for regular maintenance — but it's advisable to deep clean with hot water extraction from time to time.

So-called 'steam cleaning' is really hot water extraction — a good method of deep-cleaning your carpet.

Overwetting will result in extra detergent residue remaining in your carpet, causing it to become dirtier faster because it attracts dust and grime.

One other possible problem with hot water extraction is that the high temperature can potentially 'set' some stains. Adequate spot cleaning of stains before using hot water extraction should reduce the chances of this happening.

Also make sure plastic or aluminium pads are placed under all furniture before it's replaced, otherwise wood stains may bleed into the carpet, permanently marking it, or metals (other than aluminium) may leave marks.

BONNET CLEANING

■ **Also known as:** Dry cleaning, although it leaves your carpet slightly damp — not dry as the name suggests.

■ **What it involves:** The process involves vacuuming the carpet, applying cleaning agent to the bonnet cleaner and sometimes the carpet, then going over the carpet with the cleaner. The cleaner has a pad (the bonnet), which rubs the carpet, transferring dirt in the pile onto the pad. The carpet may also need vacuuming again after drying.

■ **Drying time:** This method only takes between one and two hours to dry — a major benefit.

■ **Good for:** Regular maintenance cleaning, as it's more convenient in terms of drying time than hot water extraction, but less effective at removing dirt.

It's also regarded as effective for cleaning the surface of high traffic areas and removing spills with little interruption to normal activities. However, it's advisable to deep clean with hot water extraction from time to time.

■ **Potential problems:** Bonnet cleaning is not designed to deep clean your carpet the way hot water extraction does. It's regarded by the Australian Standard as being a maintenance method only. If not enough solution is used, the process could damage the carpet, but an experienced operator should avoid this.

Deodorising and sanitising

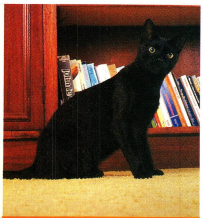
All carpet cleaning companies offer to deodorise your carpet, and some also claim to 'sanitise' it. However, there are some important points you should note before deciding to go ahead:

■ You shouldn't have to pay extra for deodorising. Most detergent solutions used for cleaning already contain a deodorant that masks the smell of the chemicals used. And the smell of damp carpet naturally disappears when it dries.

■ 'Deodorising' treatments are sometimes claimed to remove the smell of animal and human body fluids, but in fact these can only be removed 100% by fairly drastic action — if you cut out that segment of the carpet and underlay and replace it.

■ It's literally impossible to sanitise a carpet once it's been laid, so it's an unnecessary expense. Any sanitising process is meant to kill germs, but from the moment you start walking on the carpet again, you're reintroducing them.

■ Don't believe any company that says it guarantees to kill all dust mites and fleas in your carpet, either. These can only be removed from the carpet's surface — the underlay, where they normally breed, isn't touched during cleaning.



Deodorising can't remove 100% of animal smells.

Overwetting: what to do

Your carpet shouldn't squelch underfoot when it's been cleaned, and if it's still wet (as opposed to slightly damp) in 24 hours, you know too much water has been left in it. Whether it was caused by a professional cleaner or by yourself with a hired machine, you need to take action quickly.

■ **What to do:** Ask the cleaning company to go back over the floor and suck out as much water residue as possible with the cleaning machine (or do so yourself if you hired one). If the original company doesn't rectify the problem, you may want to bring in another company to try to remove more water.

Ensure there is air circulation throughout the house, by opening windows and doors and turning on fans. If the carpet is extremely wet, the cleaner should also place an industrial-strength blower on the carpet to make it dry faster (you can also hire them from many carpet cleaning companies). It may be necessary for the cleaner to lift the carpet back so the underlay can dry — and it's their responsibility to tack it back down again when drying is complete.

■ **Possible damage:** Once the carpet is dry, you may find it has water stains, detergent residue left in it, or even stains caused by a wet carpet backing. The carpet may also have shrunk.

■ **Fixing damage:** If the carpet cleaner caused the damage, they are responsible for fixing it. Once the carpet is dry, if there are stains and detergent residue, have them come back and reclean the carpet to your satisfaction. If your carpet has shrunk, split or otherwise become damaged, it may need to be replaced.

You should also contact your insurance company for their advice. If you are having problems, your state or territory consumer affairs or fair trading agency may be able to help. Your cleaner should have public liability insurance to cover any such damage, but be certain of this before hiring them (see *Ask the right questions* on page 31).

CARPET CLEANING NIGHTMARE

If Margaret had known the impact having her carpet cleaned would have on her son Joel, she'd never have had it done.

In July last year, she arranged for a well-known company to clean her lounge-room carpet using the hot water extraction process, then treat it with a protector.

The cleaning was done early in the morning and she kept the house well ventilated all day to help the carpet dry, later placing a heater on it. Her two sons were out of the house most of the day and evening.

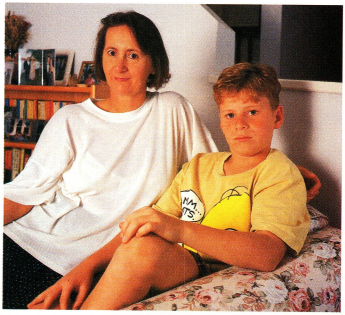
But the next morning, Joel, aged 11, woke up with the right side of his face and neck badly inflamed, and the skin on his hands itchy. Margaret was reluctant to believe it was related to the carpet cleaning process, but the house still had a strong, lingering smell from the day before.

The doctor prescribed Joel an antihistamine and cortisone cream and tablets, but five days later the rash had spread over his entire body, and his right arm was disturbingly swollen.

Alarmed, the doctor prescribed different medication, which started to take effect within 24 hours. However, it took three weeks from the time the rash started before it had completely disappeared. During this time, Joel suffered pain, discomfort and embarrassment.

While there is no certainty which chemical caused Joel's reaction, Margaret is concerned that a similar reaction might happen in other families. She suggests parents keep toddlers and their toys off the carpet until it's completely dry, and if possible, have children stay overnight at family or friends.

All the companies we spoke to said such a reaction was unusual. Carpet cleaning companies can't afford to use chemicals that are known to be dangerous because their operators use them on a daily basis. They couldn't afford to risk their own health, let alone that of their customers.



Removing carpet stains

This is first aid for your carpet. If the stain persists, call a professional. Read the recipes for cleaning solutions below before using the table. Test in an inconspicuous spot first. Information is based on that supplied in the Australian Standard for carpet cleaning.

Stain	Wool carpet	Nylon carpet	Acrylic carpet
Blood	Cold water, then fabric detergent	Dish detergent, then ammonia, then dish detergent, then cold water	Water, then laundry detergent, then cold water
Chocolate	Warm water, then carpet shampoo solution	Dish detergent, then ammonia, then dish detergent, then water	Laundry detergent, then water, then dry cleaning fluid
Coffee / tea	Warm water, then fabric detergent	Dish detergent, then vinegar, then dish detergent, then water	Laundry detergent, then water, then sour solution
Fruit juice	Warm water, then fabric detergent	Dish detergent, then vinegar, then dish detergent, then water	Laundry detergent, then water
Lipstick	Dry cleaning fluid, then fabric detergent, then water	Dry cleaning fluid, then dish detergent, then water	Laundry detergent then water
Milk	Warm water, then fabric detergent, then dry cleaning fluid	Dish detergent, then ammonia, then detergent, then water	Laundry detergent, then water
Shoe polish (paste)	Dry cleaning fluid, then carpet shampoo solution	Dry cleaning fluid, then dish detergent, then water	Dry cleaning fluid, then laundry detergent, then water
Soft drink	Warm water, then fabric detergent	Dish detergent, then vinegar, then dish detergent, then water	Laundry detergent, then water, then sour solution
Urine (fresh stain)	Carpet shampoo solution	Water, then ammonia, then dish detergent, then water	Laundry detergent, then water, then sour solution
Wax	Absorbent paper and a hot iron, then dry cleaning fluid	Absorbent paper and a warm iron, then dry cleaning fluid (for three to five minutes)	Dry cleaning fluid
Wine	Warm water, then fabric detergent	**Red**: Dish detergent, then hydrogen peroxide/ammonia, then vinegar, then dish detergent, then water. **White**: Dish detergent, then vinegar, then dish detergent, then water	Laundry detergent, then water, then hydrogen peroxide solution, then water

Stain removal guide

Some stains can't even be effectively removed by professionals, but for most spills, the general rule is the faster you take action the better. The table above is a home remedy guide for some stains, adapted from the Australian Standard for carpet cleaning. There are also commercially available stain removal products which may be used. Follow manufacturers' directions carefully.

When mopping up a spill, start by using clean cloths or paper towels to mop up excess spillage. Work from the outside of the stain inwards (dabbing not scrubbing), to prevent the stain spreading. Use a spoon or a dull knife to remove the bulk of semi-solids or grease. Follow the steps in the table carefully, applying the suggested solution to the swabbing towel, applying it to the stain, then mopping it up before applying the next one. Don't pour the treatment directly onto the carpet, and be careful not to overwet the carpet. For blended carpets (for example, wool/nylon) follow the directions for the fibre that's the largest proportion.

Allow the carpet to dry between stages — don't use a spotter on carpet that has been treated with water and is still wet. If you're uncertain whether the stain is oil or water-based, try dry cleaning fluid first, before you try water, because water can set an oil-based stain. Follow the directions on the label for all products.

Recipes for cleaning solutions

Detergents

Fabric detergent: A solution of one teaspoon (5 mL) of wool detergent, one teaspoon (5 mL) of white vinegar and one litre of warm water.
Dish detergent: One teaspoon (5 mL) of clear dishwashing detergent in one cup (250 mL) of warm water.
Laundry detergent: One tablespoon of dry-powder laundry detergent dissolved in one cup (250 mL) of warm water. Don't use liquid detergent.

Hydrogen peroxide

Hydrogen peroxide/ammonia: Four parts hydrogen peroxide (3% strength), one part household ammonia (the foaming type which contains detergent). Use within two hours of mixing.
Hydrogen peroxide solution: Nine parts water, one part hydrogen peroxide (3% strength).

Other

Ammonia: Undiluted household ammonia (the foaming type which contains detergent).
Carpet shampoo solution: Follow the manufacturer's directions.
Dry cleaning fluid: Follow the manufacturer's directions.
Sour solution: One part white vinegar and one part water.
Vinegar: Undiluted white vinegar.

Not all right, Jack

You should never work under a car which is supported only by a jack — unfortunately, not everyone follows this important safety rule.

BRIAN OF SYDNEY WAS ON HIS way to work when the brake pads of his 1986 KC Laser hatchback partially failed.

During his lunch break Brian found a level area in his workplace car park and decided to replace the pads himself. Using the scissor jack which came with his secondhand car, he started jacking up the front passenger's side. Just as it began to take the weight of the car, the jack collapsed without warning.

Brian was extremely lucky the jack didn't collapse when he was in the middle of changing the brake pads — his head could have been in the wheel arch.

"In the past I've worked under my car when it was supported only by a jack," admits Brian.

CHOICE invited a senior service specialist from Ford to inspect the jack. A visual inspection led him to conclude the jack had been used for purposes "beyond its design intent" — such as moving boulders — by a previous owner of the car.

This incident highlights the danger of working under a car supported solely by a jack.

Changing a flat tyre can be hazardous — there are safety rules you should follow.

USING A JACK SAFELY

To avoid a serious accident while jacking up your car, it's important to observe the following guidelines:

- Only use your car's jack for what it was designed. Don't use it for jacking up heavy objects or bigger cars and trucks, or other purposes which may overload and weaken it.
- Never get under a vehicle supported only by a basic jack. If you're going to be regularly jacking up your car (to service it, for example), invest in a hydraulic trolley jack and rest the car on axle stands, or buy a set of wheel ramps (although these limit the amount of work you can do, as you can't take the wheels off).
- Don't start or run the engine while the car is supported by a jack.

CHANGING A TYRE

The only time most of us get our jack out of the boot is when a flat tyre needs changing. Here are some important tips:

- Don't try to continue driving on a flat tyre. You'll probably ruin your wheel and possibly damage the suspension system.
- Never try to change a tyre or repair your car while it's in the traffic lanes of a road or highway. Driving very slowly, move the vehicle off the road. If you can't find a quiet, level area, call a tow truck.
- Park your car on a hard, level surface, with the parking brake on and the transmission in reverse (if it's a manual) or park (if it's an automatic).
- Turn on the hazard lights.
- Find large stones or bits of wood to chock the wheels on the opposite side of the car from the flat tyre, so they won't roll.
- Try not to place any part of your body underneath your car while changing the tyre.
- Follow the instructions on the jack, making sure you use the correct jacking points on the car. (The Australian Standard for vehicle jacks says jacks must be marked with clear instructions for use.) ❑

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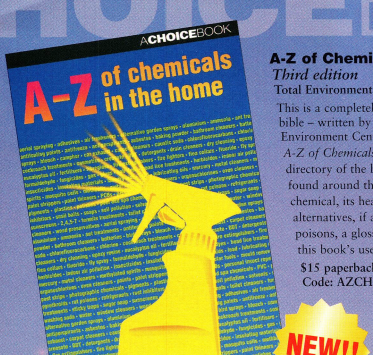

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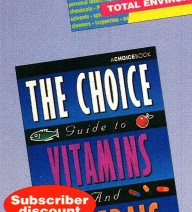

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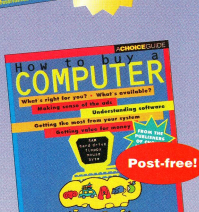

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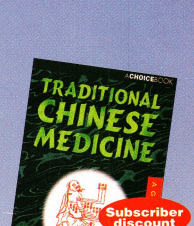

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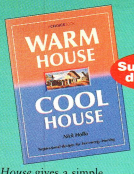

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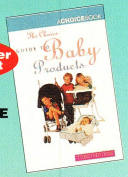

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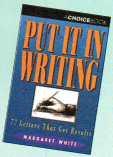

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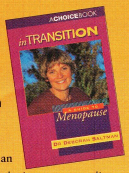

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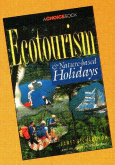

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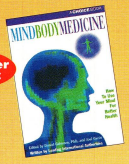

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Daniel Goleman and Joel Gurin, (Editors)

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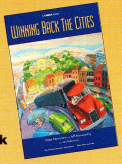

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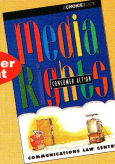

MEDIA RIGHTS Consumer Action

Communications Law Centre

MEDIA RIGHTS Consumer Action provides factual, simple and unbiased information on newspapers, magazines, TV, community broadcasting, multimedia, pay TV, the ABC and SBS, and advertising. It includes your basic rights regarding the media, contacts for more detailed information, and sample complaint letters.

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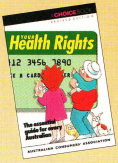

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To help you in your encounters with the medical system, this thorough guide gives detailed information on topics such as consent to and confidentiality of treatment, access to medical records, which treatments are covered by Medicare, care of the aged and how to make a complaint.

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Anyone for Internet?

Hooking your computer to the Internet is getting easier — but if you choose the wrong Internet access provider, your connection might be too slow to be useful.

IT'S BECOMING HARDER to read a newspaper or magazine without coming across mysterious Internet addresses like http://www.sofcom.com.au/ACA/ or ausconsumer@choice.com.au. If you're starting to feel left out, it's probably time to start thinking about getting 'connected'.

The terms *Internet*, *World Wide Web* and *Internet access provider (IAP)* are explained in *What is the Internet?*, opposite — it gives basic definitions to help you understand this report. If you're interested in finding out what you actually need to get onto the Internet, turn to *Getting hooked up* on page 44.

IT'S ALL ABOUT SPEED

The World Wide Web, or the Web as it's called, is one of the most popular ways of finding information on the Internet. However, nothing is more annoying — or boring — than having to wait several minutes for a Web page to come up on your computer screen. That's why it's important to select an IAP which provides you with a fast link to the Internet.

The speed of the link is affected by a number of factors, including the computer and software you're using, the speed of your modem, your IAP's equipment and the capacity of its link to the Internet, the number of other people using the IAP at the same time as you, other traffic on the Internet and the load on the computer you're trying to connect to.

There's a further complication: sometimes your IAP may seem to be fast, but you may not be getting the most up-to-date information. Some Web browsers (software that lets you look at Web pages) are set up to use 'proxy caches', also called 'proxy servers'. This means copies of overseas Web pages are stored on the IAP's computer. When you look up a Web page, it's retrieved from the IAP's computer, rather than the original computer. This means you get very quick screen updates, but not necessarily the latest version of the Web page, though some proxy servers are set up to update Web pages automatically.

Most Web browsers also feature their own 'caches', which means recently looked-at Web pages are stored on your computer's hard disk or RAM (random access memory). If you look at the pages a second time, they are retrieved from the cache, rather than the original site on the Internet. We turned both these features off for our testing.

TIP: Pressing the 'reload' button on your Web browser should force it to retrieve the most recent version of a Web page.

WHICH IAPs ARE FASTEST?

Three IAPs were generally fast and reliable for both the US and Australian Web pages tested — ACCESS ONE, ENTERNET and ON AUSTRALIA. Other IAPs were more variable, some highly so — one IAP took 24 seconds to download a US Web page one day, but on another took more than five minutes, for example. The table on page 42 gives more information on the overall results.

However, it's important to note that the Internet access industry is in a state of constant change, meaning the speed of any IAP is likely to vary over time (see *Constant change*, left, for more details).

PHONE SUPPORT

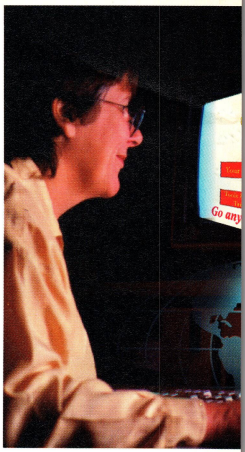
All the IAPs in our test offer some form of phone support to help you set up and use your Internet account — but quality and cost vary widely.

Some offer a free 1800 number, while others are happy to help you as long as you ring their head office, which may not be in your local call area. AUSNET offers a '190' phone number, which means you pay $2 a minute.

We rang all the IAPs with a simulated problem to check what help they gave. Not all offered the obvious advice to solve our problem, although all at least tried to help. Some took a while to return our call — **IBM Internet Connection** took a week.

EXTRA SERVICES

COMPUSERVE, ON AUSTRALIA and PEGASUS were originally set up to offer their own value-added content and services. However, with the increasing popu-



Constant change

Our results represent a snapshot of the performance of IAPs. The speed of any IAP is likely to vary over time — as new users join, they put extra load on the IAP, and slow it down. To maintain access speeds and stay competitive, IAPs need to upgrade their equipment and links to the Internet regularly.

After we'd conducted some preliminary testing in January and February this year, several IAPs told us that planned upgrades would substantially improve performance.

To find out how much difference these upgrades made, we conducted another round of testing in March and April. The two sets of results were similar, with one main exception, **ENTERNET**, which was a middle-of-the-road performer in our first test, came equal top in our second test. The general consistency between our two tests indicates the results presented in the tables are a useful guide to the service IAPs are likely to provide.

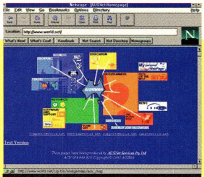
larity of the Internet, these companies have decided to offer Internet access in conjunction with the services they already provide. Some value-added services are of high quality, but since we were testing access to the Internet, we didn't include them in our scoring. The following are a few highlights of what they offer, which only represent a small sample of the extra content available.

■ **COMPUSERVE:** Provides a wide variety of content, including electronic versions of magazines such as *People*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Money*. It's also possible to obtain articles from US newspapers — although this costs extra.

■ **ON AUSTRALIA:** Though it's moving towards becoming primarily an Internet access provider, **ON AUSTRALIA** still offers exclusive access to the Microsoft Network, including services such as MSN News (Australian and international news) and live chat areas.

■ **PEGASUS:** Specialising in networks for community groups, governments and business, **PEGASUS** provides access to a range of special-interest sub-networks, such as CouncilNet, ArtsNet and the Public Health Network.

What is the Internet?



The World Wide Web — using graphics and sound to make the Internet fun and easy to use.

The Internet is an international network of millions of university, government, commercial and private computers. It's said to have around 35 million users.

There's no central point which controls the Internet, so if one computer in the network breaks down, the remaining computers can still link up.

There are different ways of transferring information on the Internet.

■ **E-mail:** Electronic mail allows you to write letters to other people or organisations who are on the Internet and have an e-mail address. An example of an Internet e-mail address is: ausconsumer@choice.com.au (our e-mail address).

■ **Newsgroups:** You can discuss almost any topic you like in newsgroups, which are split into topic areas. Say you're interested in law, you can leave a message in 'aus.legal'. Other people can then reply to or comment on your message, which you can later read, and in turn reply to.

■ **International Relay Chat (IRC):** Much like CB radio, except the channels are split into areas of interest. Unlike newsgroups, IRC is instantaneous. The people you're chatting with are at their computers — they see your words as soon as you've finished typing them and can reply straightaway.

■ **World Wide Web:** 'Web' or WWW — see below.

See *What is the Internet?* in CHOICE, July 1995, for further information.

WHAT IS THE WORLD WIDE WEB?

Originally the Internet was text-based — you typed in a command whenever you wanted to do something and you got pages of text back. The World Wide Web was developed to make the Internet fun and easy to use. Instead of screens of text, 'Web pages' combine text with graphics and even sound. By selecting keywords or graphics with your mouse, you move to other Web pages.

A **Web browser** is a piece of software which allows you to view Web sites or 'pages' on your computer.

WHAT IS AN IAP?

An **Internet access provider** (IAP) links your computer to the Internet — for a fee.

Using a modem, you connect your computer to the phone line, and then dial up the IAP's computer, which is in turn linked to the Internet.

Some IAPs charge for the amount of time you're on the Internet, others for the amount of information you transfer. Some bill you every month, while others ask you to prepay for a number of hours. A few IAPs use a combination of these billing methods.

OUR TEST

We tested IAPs which offer access to the Internet via local phone numbers in three or more states.

This included larger companies such as **ON AUSTRALIA** (see left for details), which as well as providing Internet services also offer their own special content, such as news.

Throughout the test, we acted as though we were ordinary consumers. We followed the instructions provided by each of the IAPs, and used the PC version of the software supplied or recommended by them; where more than one version was offered we used the cheapest that was capable of working with a 28,800 bps modem at full speed. The software we used in our test may not be the same software available when you read this; Internet software is constantly being revised. Our tests were carried out in Sydney.

Our tests focused on the Web. According to Telstra, more than 50% of the traffic on its Internet links is Web-related. We connected to each IAP every day over a period of 10 days at a random time between 8 am and 7 pm. We timed how long it took to download four Web pages — NASA (http://www.nasa.gov/) and White House (http://www.whitehouse.gov/) Web pages in the US and the Consumers' Association (http://www.sofcom.com.au/ACA/) and University of Western Australia (http://www.uwa.edu.au:70/1/uwa/pictures/front_page.jpeg) pages here.

Internet access providers

	Company (in rank order)	Contact phone number	WWW address	Area availability
		1	2	
equal	**ACCESS ONE** *(A)*	1800 818 391	www.aone.net.au	Capital cities plus areas of NSW, Qld, SA, Tas, Vic *(F)*
equal	**ENTERNET**	1800 269 950	www.enternet.com.au	Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney *(G)*
	ON AUSTRALIA	1800 804 282	www.onaus.com.au	National
	AUSNET *(B)*	1800 806 755	www.world.net	Mainland capital cities
equal	**INTERNET ACCESS AUSTRALIA**	(03) 9686 6677*(E)*	www.iaccess.com.au	Adelaide, Brisbane, Geelong, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney
	MICROPLEX	(02) 438 1234*(E)*	www.com.au	Adelaide, Armidale, Brisbane, Hobart, Melbourne, Sydney, Tamworth
	TPG *(B)*	(02) 886 0950 *(E)*	www.tpgi.com.au	Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney *(H)*
	PEGASUS	1800 674 207	www.peg.apc.org	National
	IBM *(B)*	13 24 26	www.ibm.net	Capital cities, Ballarat, Newcastle, Wollongong
	NOT TESTED			
	COMPUSERVE *(C)*	1800 025 240	www.compuserve.com	Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Gold Coast, Hobart, Melbourne, Newcastle, Perth, Sydn
	OZEMAIL *(D)*	1800 805 874	www.ozemail.com.au	Capital cities plus other areas *(J)*

* Weekdays, Eastern Standard Time. Some IAPs have reduced weekend support hours.

(A) At the time of writing this IAP indicated it planned to upgrade its Internet links in May and again in July.

(B) This IAP says it upgraded its links to the Internet in April, after we had conducted our tests.

(C) We have not included Compuserve in our ranking because they upgraded their Internet links during testing. We recorded a significant improvement over the last four days of testing, at which time their upgrade was still not yet complete. Therefore we were unable to complete a full round of testing for this IAP.

(D) OzEmail is not included in our performance ranking because, as we were going to print, it notified us that it has changed the way its service is set up. It now has a direct link to the Internet in addition to the link we tested. It claims this has increased its capacity. We are unable to report performance results for their full capacity.

(E) Head office numbers. Check your local phone book for local or state capital numbers.

(F) Many of the larger towns on the east coast of Queensland, country areas in Victoria, Newcastle, Albury, Whyalla, Launceston.

(G) Plus surrounding areas of Melbourne and Sydney.

(H) Plus Albury, Armidale, Bowral, Dubbo, Kiama, Lake Macquarie, Longreach, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga.

(J) Alice Springs, Cairns, Gold Coast, Gosford, Newcastle, Sunshine Coast, Townsville, Wollongong.

(K) Considerably more expensive in some country areas.

(L) The "Access Saver Plan" provides 60 hours of Internet access per month for $500 during the first year, but hours must be used within certain periods; you can only use 15 hours each month between 7pm and midnight.

(M) Although this IAP achieved an average Australian performance score of two stars, we were unable to download the Australian pages on half the occasions we tried to do so. IBM says it has upgraded its link to Australian content since we tested.

Getting the right access

While we concentrated on the World Wide Web in this report, some people may find they only want to use e-mail or newsgroups, in which case most of the IAPs in our test should be OK.

Some of the companies we originally looked at only provide Web access as an additional service — it's not their core business. For example, Dialix provides cheap access to services such as newsgroups and International Relay Chat at one cent per minute. However, when we looked at Dialix Web access in February, we found it too slow for regular use. For this reason our tests were restricted to Web access providers.

WHAT TO BUY

Internet access speeds can vary widely. Our tests were performed in March and April, and several IAPs have indicated they continually upgrade their Internet links and access software, so their performance won't be static, but changing regularly (see *Constant change*, on page 40, for more information). However, our results provide a useful guide to the service IAPs are likely to provide.

The costs shown below were correct at April 30 and indicate what you'd pay for the first year, including any set-up costs, annual or monthly fees and cost of additional hours. They're based on a medium user — 15 hours a month (7 pm to midnight weekdays). They don't include the cost of software.

	ACCESS ONE BEST BUY	$499
equal	**ENTERNET**	$900
	ON AUSTRALIA (PC only)* BEST BUY	$420

*Only available to Windows 95 users. Software for Windows 3.1 and Macintosh is expected in August.

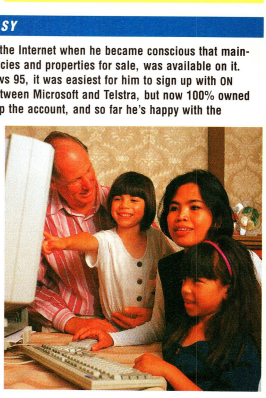
CRUISING THE WEB — IT'S EASY

Alan from Sydney decided to get onto the Internet when he became conscious that mainstream information, such as job vacancies and properties for sale, was available on it.

Being a user of Microsoft's Windows 95, it was easiest for him to sign up with ON AUSTRALIA (formerly a joint venture between Microsoft and Telstra, but now 100% owned by Telstra). Alan found it easy to set up the account, and so far he's happy with the service.

He spends about five hours a month on the Internet. He uses it for e-mail — he exchanges messages with his daughter in New Zealand — and to browse the Web. His wife Edita is completing a course at a university in New Zealand by correspondence, and she uses the connection to keep in touch with lecturers and fellow students.

Alan thinks the Internet will be an important resource for his children when they're a little older. "It'll broaden their experience and knowledge — and help them with their school work."



3 Phone support*	4 Cost for first year: Light user (5 hours per month)	Medium user (15 hours per month)	Heavy user (30 hours per month)	5 Performance score (Australia)	6 Performance score (US)	Company (in rank order)	
8am-9pm	$288	$499	$499	★★★★★ *(A)*	★★★★ *(A)*	**ACCESS ONE** *(A)*	equal
8am-8pm	$300	$900	$1800	★★★★★	★★★★	**ENTERNET**	
8am-10pm	$299 *(K)*	$420 *(K)*	$1020 *(K)*	★★★★★	★★★★	**ON AUSTRALIA**	
8.30am-9.30pm ($2 per minute)	$280	$520	$520	★★★★★ *(B)*	★★★ *(B)*	**AUSNET** *(B)*	
9am-6pm	$308	$500	$1364 *(L)*	★★★★	★★★	**INTERNET ACCESS AUSTRALIA**	equal
9am-5.30pm	$265	$745	$1465	★★★★	★★★	**MICROPLEX**	
8am-6pm	$60	$180	$360	★★★ *(B)*	★★★ *(B)*	**TPG** *(B)*	
7am-7pm	$395 *(K)*	$479 *(K)*	$575 *(K)*	★★★★	★★	**PEGASUS**	
7am-11pm	$265	$565	$925	★★ *(B)(M)*	★★★ *(B)*	**IBM** *(B)*	
7am-7pm	$405.50	$1485.50	$3105.50	*(C)*	*(C)*	**COMPUSERVE** *(C)*	
24 hours	$325	$763	$1213	*(D)*	*(D)*	**OZEMAIL** *(D)*	

1 WWW address

If you're an existing Web user, you can enter this Web address (preceded by http://) into your Web browser to obtain more information about an IAP.

2 Area availability

Areas where phone connection to the IAP can be made for the cost of a local call.

3 Phone support

Even if you know something about computers, you may need some help setting up your computer to access the Internet.

4 Cost for first year

There are simply too many billing options available for us to publish all of them. Instead, we've created three typical users — light, medium and heavy — and calculated how much it would cost each of them to use the Internet during the first year. We assumed:

- Light users would use the Internet for five hours per month.
- Medium users would use it for 15 hours per month.
- Heavy users would use it for 30 hours.
- Each user would access the Internet during the evening on weekdays between 7pm and midnight.

We calculated each user's annual fees using the most cost-effective payment plan offered by each IAP. It includes set-up fees, monthly and annual fees, as well as any charges for extra hours. We haven't included the cost of software, as in most cases there is a range of options available (see *Setting up software* overleaf). While we show the annual cost, and some IAPs do charge on an annual basis, most IAPs charge monthly. Prices were correct at April 30, 1996.

5 Performance score (Australia)

We timed how long it took to download the Consumers' Association Web page (http://www.sofcom.com.au/ACA/) and a Web page at the University of Western Australia's Web site (http://www.uwa.edu.au:70/1/uwa/pictures/front_page.jpeg) using each of the IAPs at a random time between 8 am and 7 pm each day, over a period of 10 days in March and April this year.

Each time to download was given a score ranging from zero to five points:

- 1 — 60 seconds = 5 points
- 61 — 120 seconds = 4 points
- 121 — 180 seconds = 3 points
- 181 — 240 seconds = 2 points
- 241 — 300 seconds = 1 point
- Any times over five minutes, or attempts which were not successful, scored zero.

We averaged the 20 timing scores to come up with a score for Australian operation. This was than converted to a star rating:

- ★★★★★ = very good
- ★★★★ = good
- ★★★ = average
- ★★ = poor
- ★ = very poor

IAPs are continually upgrading their services to meet increasing demand, and it's possible that by the time you read this performance may have changed (see *Constant change* on page 40).

6 Performance score (US)

The score was calculated using the same method as above, but instead of downloading Australian Web pages, we downloaded two US Web pages: the NASA (http://www.nasa.gov/) and White House (http://www.whitehouse.gov/) Web pages.

Paying for the Internet

IAPs make their money by charging you a fee for accessing the Internet.

Unfortunately we don't have room to list all the pricing structures and plans offered by each of the companies, and in any case prices are continually changing.

All the IAPs in our test charge on the basis of how much time you spend connected — though how they calculate the charges and bill you varies considerably. For example, some will bill you at the end of every month or annually, while others ask you to prepay a block of time — when you use it up, you simply buy another block of time.

Most IAPs offer a number of payment plans, designed for different types of user. For casual users, there are plans where you simply pay for the time you use — usually around $5 per hour, with cheaper rates during 'off-peak' periods.

If on the other hand you're planning to spend a lot of time on the Internet, you may prefer to select a 'heavy user' payment plan, which works out cheaper in the long term, but requires you to pay a minimum monthly or annual charge for a set number of hours. Any extra time spent on the Internet incurs additional charges.

Getting hooked up

If you don't already have a computer, it can cost several thousand dollars to hook up to the Internet — especially if you want to use the Web. You need a computer, a modem, a telephone connection, software, and an account with an Internet access provider.

A COMPUTER

If you've recently bought a new computer, it's probably fine for Internet and Web use.

If you're using a PC, we suggest, as a minimum, a 486-class machine with colour graphics and a minimum of four megabytes (4 Mb) of RAM (random access memory), though 8 Mb is preferable. It's also important that your PC has a fast serial port with a 16550 UART chip (see *What is a modem?*, CHOICE, September 1995, for more information). If you're using a Mac, we suggest a 68030 or better processor, with colour graphics and a minimum of 5 Mb of memory. Again, 8 Mb is preferable.

If you're using a machine below these specifications it may be fine for some Internet applications — such as e-mail — but may be too slow for Web use.

■ **Cost:** $2000 to $4500. (New computers range widely in price, depending on specifications and brand.)

A MODEM

A modem allows you to link your computer to other computers via a phone line.

Modems are rated according to how fast they transfer information in bits per second (bps). Older modems were only capable of 300 or 1200 bps. Nowadays, don't buy anything slower than 14,400 bps; better still, go for a V34 28,800 bps modem. See *What is a modem?*, CHOICE, September 1995, for more information.

Simply buying a faster modem is no guarantee you'll get faster Internet access. We used the same 28,800 bps modem to conduct all our tests, yet some IAPs performed much better than others.

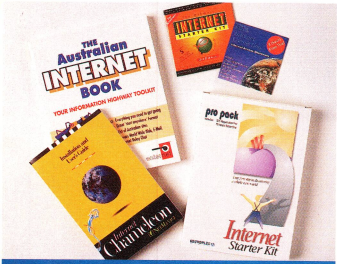
■ **Cost:** $300 to $700.

A TELEPHONE CONNECTION

It's easiest and cheapest to connect your modem to your existing phone line. However, this means you won't be able to accept incoming voice calls while you're on the Internet. You can have a service such as Telstra's Messagebank take messages for you, although this service is not available in all areas (it costs $5 a month for private residential users, $10 a month for businesses).

If you find yourself spending a lot of time on the Internet, you may want to consider having an extra phone line installed.

■ **Cost:** Up to $173 for installation. Annual rental for non-business use is $139.80.



Internet access providers — which one's for you?

SETTING UP SOFTWARE

Most people will find the hardest thing about connecting to the Internet is setting up the Internet access software on their computer in the first place. The easiest option is to use software provided by the IAP — in most cases this will have been set up for you. All the IAPs in our test provide software, either free or for a fee.

You can also use your own software. For example, Internet access software is supplied with Windows 95, but it must be set up properly before you can access IAPs other than **ON AUSTRALIA** .

Most of the software supplied by the IAPs is quite easy to set up, but it helps to know something about computers before you start. If you need help, all the IAPs offer some level of phone support.

CHOOSING AN IAP

Choosing an IAP is a matter of finding a company with a dial-up number in your area, and which offers good performance and value for money.

■ **Availability:** It's important your IAP has a local dial-up phone number. Otherwise you may find yourself paying STD charges on top of your Internet charges. Check the Yellow Pages under 'Computer on-line service providers' for IAPs operating in your area.

Another related issue is the *number* of dial-up connections the IAP has in your area. If it has too few, you may have problems getting through during peak times. We encountered engaged signals when connecting to most of the IAPs at one time or another, but we usually got through by the third or fourth time we attempted to dial in.

■ **Performance:** Not all IAPs offer the same speed of service. Different companies have different-speed links to the Internet, which means that some will be slower than others. Check the table on page 43 to see which IAPs offer the best combination of performance and cost. If there's a local IAP operating in your area offering cheaper rates, you could try it out to see if it's fast enough for your needs.

■ **Cost:** An apparently low cost may not turn out to be so cheap if you have to wait more than 10 minutes for a Web page to appear — as we did for some of the IAPs in our test. In fact it may be cheaper to use a faster, apparently more expensive service if it only takes a few seconds to download that same Web page.

We used a credit card to pay for our IAP accounts. Depending on whether the IAP charges as you go or asks you to prepay, your card will either be debited every month, or just when you buy a block of time.

■ **How much time will you spend on the Internet?** Until you've actually tried it, it's hard to estimate how much time you're going to spend using the Internet.

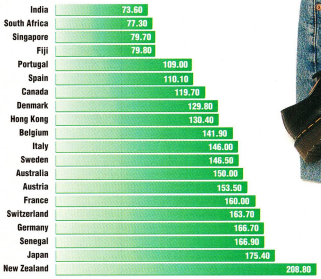
Some IAPs offer usage plans which require you to pay an annual or monthly fee, irrespective of whether you use the access time included in those fees.

To avoid spending money on something you may not use, it's important to get a feel for how much time you'll spend on the Internet. You might be able to try a friend's Internet connection before you sign up yourself, or perhaps go to an 'Internet café', where public access to the Internet is provided for a fee. ❑

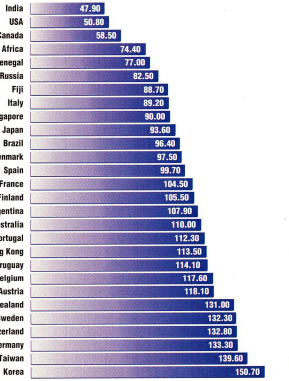
SHOPPING AROUND

TEENAGE ESSENTIALS

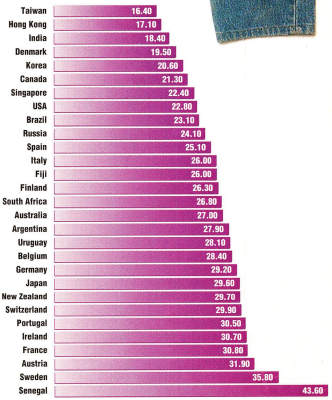
Dr Martens



Levi 501 Jeans



CDs



All prices in Australian dollars (rounded to nearest 10 cents), based on exchange rates quoted in the *Australian Financial Review*, April 24, 1996.
Note that the prices are not corrected for or modified by local income levels and are therefore most useful as a gauge of what the Australian dollar will buy in the countries named.

RECALLS AND BANS

The product: **Woolworths Variety** and **Crazy Prices** stores have recalled several children's nightwear items:

■ **GIRL'S NIGHT SHIRT,** long sleeve, sizes 116 cm to 164 cm, to fit ages six to 14 years, in mint/navy or white/burgundy with a bear print. Ref. no. 06390, barcode 9300633 466602.

■ **'NICOLE DANIELLE'** brand pyjamas, sizes 92 cm to 110 cm, to fit ages four to eight years. Ref. no. 76863, barcode 9300633 632175.

■ **'DELORANE'** brand boys' pyjamas, labelled 7/8, 9/10, 11/12. To fit ages eight to 12 years. Ref. no. 29043, barcode 9300633 498306.

The problem: They don't have the correct fire danger labels appropriate to the style of garment, and some of them may be highly flammable.

What to do: Stop using them and return these garments to the store of purchase for a full refund. For further information, contact the Product Recall Co-ordinator on (02) 847 1180.

The product: **Woolworths Supermarkets** and **Variety stores, Crazy Prices, Flemings, Food For Less, Safeway, Roelf Vos** and **Purity Supermarkets** have recalled:

■ **'SLEEPYGIRL'** brand girls' flannelette pyjamas, sizes 8, 10, 12, and 14, ref. no. 51483, barcode 9300633 453398.

■ **'SLEEPYGIRL'** brand girls' flannelette nightie, all sizes, ref. no. 51484, barcode 9300633 453404.

The problem: They are not styled to reduce fire danger as indicated on the label.

What to do: Stop using them and return them to the place of purchase for a full refund. For further information, contact the Product Recall Co-ordinator on (02) 847 1180.

The product: **Toyota** has recalled **CAMRY** and **VIENTA** models, and **Holden** has recalled **JM APOLLO** models, all manufactured from November 1992 through to March 11, 1994.

Toyota vehicle identification numbers (VIN) are:

■ VDS: 53SK10, frame numbers 09000001 to 09025988 and D9000013 to D9000089.

■ VDS: 53VK10, frame numbers 09000004 to 09000215, 09211001 to 09219034 and D9000010 to D9000018.

■ VDS: 72SK10, frame numbers 09000004 to 09000122, 09307001 to 09314140 and D9000007 to D9000122.

■ VDS: 72VK10, frame numbers 09000004 to 09000036, 09377001 to 09378218 and D9000008 to D9000035.

Holden VIN numbers are:

■ 4-cylinder sedan: 09000003 to 09000008 and 09401001 to 09405411.

■ V6 sedan: 09000003 to 09000008 and 09453001 to 09453738.

■ 4-cylinder wagon 09000004 to 09000009 and 09477001 to 09478146.

■ V6 wagon: 09000003 to 09000008 and 09494001 to 09494102.

The problem: Under conditions of prolonged country driving on high beam, and prolonged conditions of switching from one beam to the other within certain time intervals, the headlight dimmer switch mechanism may overheat and cause erratic operation of the headlights. In the worst case, power to the headlights could be lost. In addition, two earth wires in the headlight circuit could be transposed.

What to do: If your car has one of the above vehicle identification numbers, contact your nearest Toyota or Holden dealer immediately to have it checked and any necessary work done. For further information contact any Toyota dealer or the Toyota Customer Assistance Centre toll-free on 1800 800 394, Monday to Friday (EST), or any Holden dealership or the Holden Customer Assistance Service on 1800 033 349.

The product: **Grower Foods** has recalled **GROWERS 280 g ASPARAGUS SPEARS**, barcode 9414782 082016, and **CHEFS OWN 280 g ASPARAGUS SPEARS**, barcode 9311188 502806.

The problem: Deterioration in the side seam of some cans. There haven't been reports of illness, but don't eat the product's contents. If you have done so and are worried about your health, seek medical advice.

What to do: Return any unopened cans to their place of purchase, or send your name and address details together with labels only to: Reply paid 38, Grower Foods Ltd, Unit 9, Fortune House, 45 Black Street, Milton 4064, or call (07) 3368 3111.

The product: **Stihl** has recalled the **ES40 VAC 'N' BLOW**.

The problem: The internal power lead insulation could break, which may result in a short circuit in the internal power lead. If this occurs, the operator could be injured.

What to do: Return your unit immediately to the nearest Stihl specialist dealer so the internal power lead can be replaced. Don't use it again until this has been done. For the address of your nearest Stihl dealer, contact 1800 032 159 toll-free, or look in the Yellow Pages under 'Chainsaws'. For further information, contact Stihl Technical Service Manager Graeme Black on 1800 337 927.

The product: **Pyrenees Fine Foods** has recalled **SMOKED SALMON MOUSSE**, 125 g, use-by 22/5/96.

The problem: The product may have been contaminated by bacteria which could make very young and elderly people, pregnant women and people with lowered immunity sick.

What to do: Don't consume this product. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund. For further information, contact (054) 66 2390.

The product: **Trident** has recalled 700 mL **SWEET CHILLI SAUCE.**

The problem: It may have low-level yeast contamination. Though the yeast is not harmful, it produces a gas which could cause the cap to fly off when the jar is opened.

What to do: Return the jar to the place of purchase for a refund. For more information, contact Food Marketers on (02) 439 8677.

The product: **Attiki** has recalled **FETTA CHEESE, 2 kg PLASTIC PAIL**, code 4050296.

The problem: It may have been contaminated with bacteria which could make very young and elderly people, pregnant women and people with lowered immunity sick.

What to do: Discontinue using the product and return it to the place of purchase for a full refund. For further information, contact K. Alexopoulos, Attiki Holdings on (02) 519 3415 (phone) or (02) 517 2597 (fax).

The product: **Unki** has recalled **MEN'S SUDANCE SUNGLASSES**, black plastic frame, grey lenses, silver and black metal arms, green label, no. 60001 on the inside right arm.

The problem: They meet the Australian Standard requirements but are incorrectly labelled.

The product: **Unki** has also recalled **CHILDREN'S SUNDANCE SUNGLASSES**, transparent orange/yellow plastic frame with yellow tinted mirror lenses, red label, no. 20130 on the inside right arm.

The problem: They don't meet the Standard's minimum light transmittance requirement.

What to do: Return the glasses for a full refund plus postage costs to: Unki, 11 Selsmic Court, Rowville 3178, or freecall 1800 063 312.

The product: **Atlas Copco Tools** has recalled **POWERBASE 60** and **RC** battery chargers (manufactured between February 1995 and July 1995).

The problem: Under certain conditions they may overheat.

What to do: If you have purchased an Atlas Copco cordless drill with a charger that is labelled on the bottom with the following production codes: BJE, CJE, DJE, EJE, FJE, or GJE, return it to your nearest Atlas Copco Tools distributor for replacement. For further information, contact (02) 621 9482.

The product: **Sandhurst Farms** has recalled **'NO ADDED SUGAR' ORANGE JUICE**, packed in two-litre and four-litre plastic containers, with the use-by date May 21 or May 23, sold throughout Victoria.

The problem: Small pieces of metal have been found in one two-litre container.

What to do: Return the product to the place of purchase for a full refund. Only the 'No added sugar' variety is affected. For further information, contact Paul Isaac on 1800 067 439.

CHOICE

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(**D**) Includes assessment of suitability for people with disabilities
(**U**) Update of previous report
* Additions or corrections to reports, small follow-up items or letters

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